

BEACHCOMBER

SINCE 1946



A Mea Culpa from the Acquisition's Editor at the Beachcomber

By Kate Somers

Volunteering to keep the Beachcomber alive and well can be a lot of fun, especially when one gets to work behind the scenes with creative people like the couple I'm here to celebrate. You may have noticed recently that the posters put up on community bulletin board to announce the submission deadlines every month have been greatly enhanced from the boring ones they used to be (made by me). Not only are Durand and Beth

Begault the clever ones behind these amusing posters, but their work can also be seen from time to time inside the magazine. I am sure some of you have wondered about the whacky minds behind them. My apologies for letting them go out into the world without crediting their makers. Here are some of recent examples. Expect more to come (but no pressure Durand and Beth).



Artwork by Durand and Beth Begault

“Reflections on the January 2025 LA Fires and the Disaster Response”

By Susannah Kennedy and Stephen Somers, Muir Beach Disaster Council members

Most of us know someone in the LA area and we have been feeling their pain ... and also applauding the degree to which their evacuation preparation mitigated the overall loss of life. As members of the Muir Beach Disaster Council, we wondered what the LA Fires can teach us in Muir Beach. At our January meeting Fire Chief Chris Gove was kind enough to answer liaisons' questions.

We have the following reflections, which will be of interest to all Muir Beachers:

- While risk of a devastating wildfire in Muir Beach is low, the risk remains.

At a bare minimum, everyone should follow the guidelines from FireWise on home hardening and brush removal.

As in LA, there could conceivably be a 'perfect storm' of events that come together:

- Strong winds and low humidity
- Excessive fuel loads, such as uncleared brush
- Lack of home hardening

Marin County officials bring the most accurate current scientific knowledge into account when announcing a Red Flag Day - based on wind predictions, direction and overall level of humidity. On such a day, there could be rare strong winds from an inland direction. This is what happened in the Pacific Palisades fire: The fire was driven from the northeast and inland over the hill towards the ocean.

On Red Flag days:

- there will be a large sign at the Beach Parking Lot announcing NO FIRES. This will be enforced.
- have your GoBags and pets located and prepare what you would take with you.
- have your car filled with fuel and pointing out the driveway.
- pay attention for messages from AlertMarin. Those alerts will come automatically via landlines. And also via cellphone and email IF YOU HAVE SIGNED UP.

As in LA, the alerts will provide instructions on what to do. The first type of alert is an Evacuation Warning. The second is an Evacuate Order with instructions re: the route. For Muir Beach, this would be 1) Highway 1 towards Stinson 2) Frank Valley Road towards Muir Woods or 3) Highway 1 towards Mill Valley.

Chris' advice: Leave as early as possible if you are concerned and pay attention during Red Flag Warnings. Be on alert in any low humidity conditions.

If you drive and have to leave your car, pull over to the side of the road. Leave room for emergency vehicles to pass!

In Muir Beach, we are lucky to have both the beach parking lot and Big Beach. If you feel uncomfortable evacuating in your car or you see there is already traffic forming, make your way ON FOOT with pets and GoBags to Big Beach. Ask your neighbors for help if needed. Do not go in the water (hypothermia). Lie down on the sand if necessary. You will be safe there.

Do NOT drive to the beach parking lot as the gate may be locked.

Little Beach would be a poor place to seek refuge in the event of a large fire due to its small size.

Summary:

For us in Muir Beach, the LA Fires serve as a 'teachable moment'. Grass-roots community organization saves lives! Please get to know your Disaster Council liaison (an updated list will be on the Muir Beach Fire Department website shortly) if you are unsure of your liaison. And if you anticipate needing extra help, please approach your neighbors and friends before you ever need to ask in an actual emergency.

Let us help our neighbors here, in LA, and elsewhere across the ever-warming globe.

More resources: www.marinwildfire.org

Sign up for AlertMarin

<https://emergency.marincounty.gov/pages/alertmarin>

or call (415) 473-6584

Inside

| | |
|--|-------|
| A Mea Culpa from the Acquisition's Editor at the Beachcomber..... | 2 |
| “Reflections on the January 2025 LA Fires and the Disaster Response” | 3 |
| ON THE COVER..... | 4 |
| Random thoughts | 4 |
| Beachcomber Financial Report | 5 |
| Firing Up Herd Immunity for Wildfire Prevention..... | 6-7 |
| Step Up for Community Action Marin..... | 8-9 |
| The Shifting Tides..... | 10 |
| Aran Collier 1959-2024 – A Muir Beach Life | 11 |
| Goodwill Label Stories..... | 12-13 |
| Muir Beach Dog of the Month ... | 13 |
| All's Fair in Arts & Crafts 2024..... | 14-15 |
| Wicked Wicked..... | 16 |
| An Invitation to Gather: Women of Muir Beach..... | 17 |
| Move, Groove, and Connect: Muir Beach's Mindful Movement Gathering..... | 18 |
| MBVFD Call Log..... | 19 |
| Now is the Best Time of the Year to Remove French Broom from Our Yards!..... | 20-21 |
| MUIR BEACH <i>haiku</i> | 22 |
| Coho by Mia..... | 22 |
| Stringing the lights to light up the neighborhood | 23 |
| Community at its best..... | 23 |
| Muir Beach Memory: <i>End of Summer BBQ 2018</i> | 23 |
| Save the Date! 51st Annual MBVFD BBQ..... | 24 |
| The Old Pine Tree..... | 24 |

ON THE COVER

Sample Page

Sizes vary

Illustrations in watercolor, ink, digital
Ellen Litwiller

These samples demonstrate a variety of styles and mediums, highlighting Ellen's skills in detailed line work, vibrant watercolors and ink in combination with digital editing. Her work strikes a unique balance between careful scientific observation and playful creativity.

Ellen works in her studio in Muir Beach at the house she grew up in.

After graduating from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Ellen returned to the Bay Area. While currently focusing on illustration, she continues to freelance in the museum sector, specializing in mural painting, illustration, model making, and preparation for Natural History Museum exhibits. To explore more of her work, please follow this link: <http://www.ellenlitwiller.net/> or contact her at: ellenlit@sbcglobal.net

Random thoughts ...

By Mike Miller

It's illegal to hold your cell phone while driving, but ok to juggle a hot cup of coffee and a donut ... Do we really need full body deodorants for our pits and privates when soap and water have worked well all these years ... What do you suppose foreign visitors to America think when they see men, women, and children wearing camo ... I hope all cyclists are organ donors ... Jumbo shrimp, awfully good, Irish Cultural Center, bittersweet ... If we send ca\$h to Kars-for-Kids will they use it to finally change their jingle ... If you don't believe in abortion, don't have one ... Happy Birthday to Martha de Barros and Jerry Pearlman who have celebrated their 90th birthdays and left the ranks of octogenarians to move on ... Dress codes continue to become more and more casual but I still feel better when dealing with a banker in a suit and tie ... Now that Covid is pretty much in the rear view window, do we now blame everything on AI ...

The *Beachcomber*, our neighborhood news, is published quarterly by and for residents, friends, family and former residents of Muir Beach. Published since 1946 (on and off), circulation 170 (more or less).

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Contribute your essays, poems, stories, photos, artwork, announcements, reviews – anything that celebrates Muir Beachers and our community. Everything printed should be considered solely the opinion of the writer and printed in the form and condition as submitted. *Beachcomber* exercises no editorial control over content except for readability and general appearance.

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BEACHCOMBER FINANCIAL REPORT, JANUARY 2025

By Beth Begault

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the *Beachcomber* membership drive this year. Your donations allow Muir Beach's local news quarterly to keep on keeping on—now in its 79th year.

Printing costs account for the majority of the annual budget, and all of the staff labor is volunteer. Costs per issue vary by number of pages and by design decisions (color pages vs black-and-white). On the low end, it costs about \$600 for a black-and-white issue with a color cover. Costs run to \$800 and up in issues that print some interior pages in color.

We're always hoping to gather at least \$3,000/year in donations to cover the cost of publishing four issues per year. We haven't met the \$3000 goal since 2021, hence the various pleas for donations you may have seen in the last few issues while the balance has been sinking. Donation totals are down from last year, but a last minute generous donation from the Art Fair saved the day for now. ***Donations are gladly accepted and appreciated year-round, and no amount is too small.***

| YEAR | \$ AMOUNT | # OF DONATIONS | AVG \$ 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 |
| 2021 | \$3,160 | 65 | \$48 |
| 2022 | \$1,430 | 27 | \$53 |
| 2023 | \$2,234.25 | 42 | \$53 |
| 2024 | \$2,055 | 31 | \$66 |

ACCOUNT BALANCES AS OF 1/26/25

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| BUSINESS CHECKING | \$1,536.58 |
| BUSINESS SAVINGS | \$ 500.20 |
| TOTAL CASH ACCOUNTS | \$2,036.78 |

If you haven't donated in the last 12 months, please consider donating now via Paypal with our handy QR code (Beth Begault).



If you prefer, you can mail/drop your check to:
Beachcomber
19 Seacape Drive
Muir Beach, CA 94965

Firing Up Herd Immunity for Wildfire Prevention *By Pamela Tom Swarts*

Being born and raised in Los Angeles, I shuddered at the news of wildfires erupting on January 7. I immediately texted my high school friend, Deb, who lives in Pacific Palisades. She had to evacuate her house. The order was made more difficult because another high school friend who is an interior designer had just finished decorating Deb's beautiful home. Across town, the Eaton fire in Altadena hit closer to home—literally. My childhood home sits seven miles from the heart of Altadena.

I am not unaccustomed to wildfires. As a broadcast journalist for ABC7News (KGO), I covered several wildfires including South Lake Tahoe's Angora Fire in 2007. The 2500-acre wildfire was called the area's worst fire in 50 years. It destroyed 242 residences and 67 commercial structures. On assignment, I met young lads turned seasonal firefighters as they camped in the forest in between clearing brush and creating fire breaks. I also spent days with homeowners sifting through the ashes and what was left of their home, if anything. One woman and her son were desperately trying to find her wedding ring. She and her husband had been married for 50 years before he died and that wedding ring was her last physical tie to him. They didn't find it.

Living in Muir Beach may be across the state from Tahoe yet we share the threat of wildfires. Given the large devastation caused by the LA fires, the risk of fire in our community is likely top of mind for many residents—and that's a good thing.

Herd Immunity

As the founder of HPVANDME, a nonprofit providing education about HPV cancer prevention, I often talk with doctors about "herd immunity." That's when enough people get vaccinated to become immune from a particular disease. Herd immunity relies on the majority of people to participate, or it doesn't work. Herd immunity protects the entire community. It's about being a part of a community. Herd immunity is community.

So how does herd immunity relate to wildfire prevention?

Muir Beach's opportunity for the best wildfire outcome requires the herd to unite. That means all residents and owners make the decision to step up, creating defensible space around their homes and investing in hardening their homes to stop embers from flaring up. We can do it because we've already shown that we're capable.



MWPA Chipper Days at Muir Beach, October 2024

The 2024 Chipper Days participation tally revealed that Muir Beach came in fourth of 67 Marin Firewise sites for total cubic yards of vegetation removed. In other words, 98 loads of brush and other vegetation totaling 458 cubic yards ended up in the chipper! That's an average of 4.7 cubic yards per load/household. While we should congratulate ourselves, we must do even better.

"We need vegetation removal to exceed vegetation grown in future years," said Don Piotter, Muir Beach Firewise Team Lead.

How Much Mitigation is Enough?

Michael Wara wants to find the answer to that question. Wara studies climate and energy policy at Stanford's Woods Institute for the Environment.

"Even though I control the risk on my property, it is not enough," said Wara in a recent interview.

Wara says scientists must determine how many homes in a given neighborhood need to have taken all of the prevention measures to reach that effective level of herd immunity resilience. Nonetheless, he also says it is clear that completing all recommended mitigation steps is better than taking a piecemeal or a la carte approach.

The MWPA provides limited home hardening grants to homeowners. While the grant amount may fall short of the actual cost; however, home hardening is arguably, a worthwhile investment. It is much less than having to rebuild one's house—especially as costs to build have increased and construction contractors are in short supply. *Learn about grant programs: <https://www.marinwildfire.org/funding-assistance-and-partnerships>*

What to Know About Fire Insurance

Several Muir Beach households have already had their homeowners insurance cancelled. Others have had their properties inspected by their insurance company and given a list of defensible space and home hardening

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BEACHCOMBER

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improvements with a completion deadline. If the improvements are not made by the deadline, owners are told that they will be cancelled. From an insurance perspective alone, it is undeniably prudent for Muir Beach residents to prioritize and implement defensible space and home hardening standards.

The herd immunity effect is also critical to encourage fire insurance companies to keep writing policies in Muir Beach. Even if you do the thorough mitigation work around your house, if your neighbor has not, insurers will likely still consider your home high risk. The converse is also true, if most or all homes ARE fire safe, they are much more likely to maintain existing policies and write new ones.

Some residents have declined to take action on their properties citing concerns such as loss of privacy, cost, and pointing to other hazards on nearby private property or public lands. Residents should not be deterred, says the Muir Beach Firewise team. Safer ways to preserve privacy and manage the cost of mitigation efforts are available. In addition, there have been extensive efforts to reduce hazards on public lands near Muir Beach, including Highway 1 clearance, eucalyptus thinning, Mt. Tam controlled burns, and two PG&E vegetation clearance projects on Sunset Way.

California tops the list in wildfire risk, according to a January 2025 report. The report found that more than 800-thousand CA homes are uninsured of the 7.6 million homes in the state. *Source: <https://www.lendingtree.com/insurance/wildfire-risks-study/>*

Those who do have insurance are usually paying more for less coverage.

On KQED Forum's January 14 program about fire insurance, Amy Bach explained that California "Fair Plan" coverage will be "thinner" following the devastation of the LA fires. Bach is executive director and co-founder, United Policyholders, a San Francisco-based nonprofit that advocates for insurance consumers. The CA Fair Plan provides basic fire insurance for high risk properties that cannot be covered by a traditional policy. Rates are higher than typical fire insurance policies; coverage is typically lower; and the claims process can be slower.

With less comprehensive coverage or no insurance at all, reducing risk becomes even more critical. While

homeowners focus on mitigation work, we can also advocate for insurers to establish methods to correlate mitigation work with their underwriting policies.

"The models that insurers use do not account for that," said Dave Jones, director of the Climate Risk Initiative at UC Berkeley's Center for Law, Energy and the Environment (CLEE). Jones was also a guest on Forum.

In 2024, SB 1060, a proposed state bill that would require insurance companies to consider "wildfire risk reduction associated with hazardous fuel reduction" for underwriting purposes—failed to pass.

Working Together

Up to now, the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA) has taken a "carrots and NOT sticks" approach with residents to encourage more widespread mitigation of wildfire fuels in fire prone communities.

"We will continue to use the carrot approach with residents too, but maybe it's time to make it a spicy carrot," said Chris Gove, fire chief, Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department.

Muir Beach really has no choice but to make smart choices. We must reduce fire risk to the best of our ability. None of us lives in a vacuum. Just as herd immunity is the foundation to public health safety, robust participation in the community's fire prevention efforts will produce positive results.

The Muir Beach Firewise Team thanks you. And let's thank each other for being proactive and keeping Muir Beach as safe from wildfires as possible.

—The Muir Beach Firewise Team



We welcome new members. If you would like to join our team, please reach out to one of us. (l to r): Don Piotter, Rick Bernard, Pamela Tom Swarts, Klaus Poppensieker, Chris Gove, (not pictured: David Taylor).

Step Up for Community Action Marin *By Pamela Tom Swarts*

Artist Jude Vasconcelles rents a cottage in Marshall, a place she's called home for decades. She says she relies on social security and anything she earns from her artwork to pay the rent. Vasconcelles worries that one day, she could lose her housing and be forced to move away.

"I'm hanging on by my fingernails because I'm on the edge financially. It would take one dental emergency or car emergency to be beyond my income limits," says Vasconcelles.

She calls constant concerns about housing and staying in west Marin is stressful. In fact, 41% of Marin households with senior residents are deemed low income, says Housing for All Marin, a coalition of Marin community groups advocating for more affordable housing.

Marin Seniors Are Struggling

The Marin County Housing Element Plan reports, "the communities of Central Coastal West Marin and Marin City have the highest percentages of extremely low income households (29% and 39.7%, respectively)." <https://bit.ly/MarinHousingElementPlan> (page 42)

In addition, citing 2000 and 2010 census data, Marin Health and Human Services found, "Accounting for local cost of living, the Elder Index in Marin is between 2 to 4 times the poverty level for most Older Adults. That's over 9,000 elders struggling to make ends meet in Marin County ... More than half of all elder renters living alone in Marin are trying to survive on incomes below the Elder Index." <https://bit.ly/healthymarin>

The Elder Index is a tool that shows how much income older adults need to meet their basic needs and age in place—with dignity. In Muir Beach, the median age is 61.2 years; the 2024 poverty rate is 10.03 percent. <https://bit.ly/worldpopreview>

Marin seniors are not only concerned about having a roof over their heads, some worry about being able to afford food. From 2019 to 2023, food insecurity among older adults rose eight percent, from 10% to 18%. <https://bit.ly/MarinOlderAdultsNeeds> (page 12)

How Can Marin Neighbors Help?

The Black Lives Matters movement began in 2013. In 2020, when it escalated after the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer, Muir Beach

neighbors reacted by posting "#Black Lives Matter" yard signs. A group of Muir Beach women met at the row of mailboxes on a regular basis holding signs to demonstrate their unity for equality. Muir Beach residents care. And together, we can take action. Meet Community Action Marin:

Community = a group of people that care about each other and feel they belong together

Action = a thing that is done, not merely thought or spoken about

Marin = our collective home

Community Action Marin (CAM) is Marin County's largest anti-poverty agency—for almost 60 years. <https://camarin.org/>

CAM offers programs to help seniors, children, and families in need. I became involved with CAM when I realized that poverty lives in our backyard. As a current board member, let me share just a few of CAM's impactful programs:

- Financial well being helps people learn how to manage money so they may improve their credit, reduce their debt, and become self-sufficient.
- Housing assistance directs the unhoused to programs and mental health services aimed at long term solutions. Something as simple as providing help with housing applications and rental assistance can make all the difference when it comes to getting clients settled in permanent housing.
- Early childhood education allows parents to work and help support their families while knowing their children are learning in a safe environment.

Challenges Ahead

In 2025, with new leadership changes at all levels of government, agencies such as Community Action Marin face great uncertainty.

"Community Action Agencies have received bipartisan support since their inception in 1964, and this a testament to their impact and value. No one wants poverty in their community," says CAM CEO Chandra Alexandre. "Our agency's programs, services, and advocacy efforts are essential to building prosperous, resilient, and equitable communities where everyone can thrive."

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We are entering an era when equity programs face tangible budget cuts. The push to eliminate federal funding for some nonprofit organizations will hit close to home. As a result, it will take more than a village to battle poverty. It will require all of us.

“On behalf of the board and staff at Community Action Marin, I call upon public and private sectors, policymakers, and community members to join in taking action for a more inclusive and equitable society,” says Alexandre.

What Does Impact Look Like?

Here are just a few examples of CAM’s successes.

Safety Net: In 2024, the organization’s “safety net” programs provided more than half a million dollars to 877 households via the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). People like “Martin” in his 70’s secured new benefits in order to keep the lights on and keep their homes warm.

Economic Justice: CAM first met “Bless Kreiger” when he was homeless. After going through the agency’s Financial Coaching program, Bless followed a step-by-step plan to change his life around. Today Bless boasts a credit score of 817 and opened a savings account.

Children and Family Services: CAM is grounded in the federal Head Start program, providing early childhood education (ECE), health, and nutrition services to low income children and families. Enrollment in early childhood education not only allows parents to pursue job training and other opportunities for financial independence; it provides students with a strong foundation.

Take John Lam, who went from poverty to principal dancer at the Boston Ballet. His Vietnamese refugee parents raised him in San Rafael’s Canal District. They enrolled him in CAM’s ECE program as well as Performing Stars of Marin, another nonprofit that provides creative opportunities for youth.

“It gave me the opportunity to become who I am,” says Lam.



John Lam, Canal Child Care Center, San Rafael. Photo by Zeva Longley

“At the age of four, I was offered a scholarship to go and dance at Marin Ballet. Community Action Marin facilitated all of that by allowing me to go to childcare for free and help facilitate the comings and goings to the lessons and finding funds for me to go to dance classes.” <https://bit.ly/JohnLam>

Through funding, CAM pays Head Start teachers while they are still working toward their degrees. An ongoing challenge: the demand for teachers remains greater than supply. Why? Teachers often can’t afford to live in Marin and eventually, seek employment elsewhere.

Step Up Marin

In Muir Beach, we enjoy a multitude of blessings. Our bubble provides safety and security. Surrounded by natural beauty, we only need to look out of our windows to marvel at the magnificent Pacific Ocean. We live next to Muir Woods! We embrace a close knit community where neighbors gather regularly for fellowship, nourishing foods, and full moon hikes. We enjoy each other’s talents, from musicians and artists to chefs and poets. We help neighbors in need. We have food and shelter. We thrive without the worry of how to survive.

Now, perhaps more than ever, Community Action Marin needs Marin to step up. I invite my neighbors to learn more by attending CAM’s annual fundraising event, “Step Up Marin” on **Friday, May 16, 2025**, at CAM’s new campus at 7655-7665 Redwood Blvd in Novato. Please visit the link below or contact me for more information. Attendees will hear the latest on how CAM is fighting poverty in Marin and learn about ways to help. Individual and business sponsorships welcome. More: <https://camarin.org/event/step-up-marin/>



John Lam, former principal dancer, Boston Ballet. Photo by NYDance Project Ken Brower

The Shifting Tides

(Aran Collier 1959 - 2024)

On 28 December, we laughed and we cried at the farewell party for our beloved Aran Collier.

The Moore Family led the charge, Mike acting as Master of Ceremonies for his childhood friend.

People came from far and wide. One could say the full breadth and width of Aran's life came together that sad Saturday. One learns so much in farewells; especially the kindnesses and something about hope, attitude, forgiveness and the influence one person can have on so many.

I learnt to know Aran as my next door neighbor over pots of beans for the barbecue. Every year after he could no longer make the beans, I would say "How about you teach me to make those beans again for the barbecue?" But I was too late to the game.

We had a standing joke about Muir Beach boys and running races. After all, he held the record at Tam high for the 2 mile and still does. I had told him that my son was the fastest freshman runner in Marin one year. I felt it was because at a certain early teen moment when kids only want to be over the hill, parents like me start saying "Well run over." And sure enough they do. Tenn still does.

In honor of Aran's hospitality to so many, his love of fishing and his fondness for New Mexico, poached salmon was prepared and Pozole, a beautiful touch. People came from Canada and New York and all over California and New Mexico and beyond. The house was full, the way he liked it.

In the last few years when we began to watch the slow decline, I still counted on Aran at Little Beach, my swimming hole. And on many days when I went down to swim in the winter, I would ask him to stay whilst I swam. "In case I drowned" he could tell people what happened, that was our joke. Then one day I asked him to sit on the log and wait for me to finish my swim like he always did, only this time, in the middle of my swim I looked back and he was heading up the path to Cove Lane. I yelled from the water, "Hey Aran, wait for me! You are supposed to be watching me in case I drown." And in that moment I realized he was beginning to walk down the ghost trail.

Dear Aran, we all expect you to come walking 'round the corner somewhere in Muir Beach at any moment...

This is a love letter to you.

–Beth Nelson



A New Day, photo by Janet Tumpich

Aran Collier 1959-2024 - A Muir Beach Life

Aran Collier was a lifelong Muir Beach resident, born in October of 1959, some ten months after the Collier family arrived in Muir Beach from New Mexico. After renting different houses in Muir Beach, the family moved into their own home on Sunset Way in 1964. Aran would live there the rest of his life, aside from time away to college and short periods of time in New Mexico.

Aran was highly social, helped early on by the relaxed character of the community. Muir Beach was much smaller and with a very different population in those days and Aran had a free range childhood, encompassing the beaches, hillsides, and the homes of neighbors, who included ranchers from the Azores, carpenters, warehouse workers, artists, and assorted others. This population gradually changed from the mid 60's onward, with the Seacape development bringing both good water and a growing population of professionals and their families. Muir Beach children provided Aran with lifelong friends, most notably the Moore brothers.

Aran rode the school bus to Mill Valley schools under the watchful eyes of Vic, the forever bus driver, although kindergardeners spent more time on the bus than in class! School provided a wider Marin social network for Aran and a growing circle of friends. Aided by summers at altitude in New Mexico, the Muir Beach hills, and the influence of older brothers, Aran became a successful long distance runner and his Tam High school two mile record of 9:06 remains unchallenged to this day. Although his running career was cut short by injuries, it brought him many long-term friends, both team mates and competitors from across Marin County.

Community and family exposed Aran to the Bay Area art world and the later 60's and 70's brought rock music to "The Tavern" on Big Beach, making music an important part of Aran's life. Other influences led to interests in environmental issues which he pursued in college at Humboldt State and later to a partnership with Aran Moore



Aran, 2011, photo by Malcolm Collier

in a solar water and electrical business, now known as Sun First, which pioneered solar energy in Marin and the Bay Area.

Family, if sometimes troubled, was an important aspect of Aran's life. He cared for his parents, loved his daughters, and was known by his nieces and nephews as the "fun" uncle! And then there was fishing! Aran loved fishing and eating the fish he caught, especially he loved smoking the fish. Sometimes rich meals followed successful catches, as in an Easter breakfast of planked salmon with strawberries and whipped cream.

Sadly, very early onset Alzheimer's took him after a decade long struggle. That he was able to lead a fairly happy and social life for much of that time was due to being a Muir Beach native. He could walk the hills and beaches, greeting both friends and strangers with confidence that he was on familiar ground, both social and physical. Muir Beach was his life.

—Malcolm Collier

Goodwill Label Stories

By Lynda Grose

Many thanks to Muir Beachers Lisa Eigsti and Robin Terra who visited Yerba Buena Center for the Arts last September to participate in my art/research project, Goodwill Label Stories as part YBCA's *Bay Area Now* event. Goodwill Label Stories deploys a label as a 'hook' to spark conversations with the public about second-hand clothing. The overall goal of the project is to help popularize second-hand culture and diversify 'sustainable' fashion, which is generally niche, expensive and inaccessible to many.



Sewing in label, photo by Helen Maria Nugent

The project is easy to set up. I sit at a table with a sewing machine, threads, scissors, seam ripper, labels and a rack of second hand garments on hand and simply invite members of the public to comment on the project.

Three simple questions lead the conversations:

Would you opt to label your thrifted garment on the outside after purchase?

Why?

Why not?

The responses and reflections are audio-recorded and the participant's body language captured in writing.

When people opt in and select a garment on the rack, I sew in the label free of charge, working with the participant to decide the best position and treatment. I also photograph the person wearing or holding the garment.

Though often complete strangers, people feel honored to be asked for their opinion and open up to share their reflections. Some of the themes emerging from the conversations so far include: the hierarchy of fashion branding, our own participation in that hierarchy, social stigmas around second-hand, and taking more care of clothing (and each other).



Participant 1, photo by Maureen O'Malley

Overall, people feel labeling second hand items is:

- a sign of knowing about the problem (of garment overproduction/waste) and doing something about it
- an indicator of doing a good deed
- a point of pride in being working class
- a gatherer of (previously invisible) community (of like-minded people)
- an act of disruption/protest

Themes from the conversations are analyzed and collated. Stories, images and particularly succinct comments are presented out again in the form of posters, conference slides, exhibitions, and published articles/papers.

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Lynda with Lisa, photo by Robin Terra



Lynda and Robin, photo by Lisa Eigsti

Goodwill Label Stories was first launched at Goodwill stores in Northern and Southern California. YBCA is the first non-store location used. Interview and labeling sessions are now being planned in states beyond California, to capture more diverse voices and perspectives. Future plans may include a book of the people interviewed and their insights. We might even find Lisa and Robin on the pages! Stay tuned!

For more images see Instagram: @goodwilllabelstories.

Announcing ... Muir Beach Dog of the Month



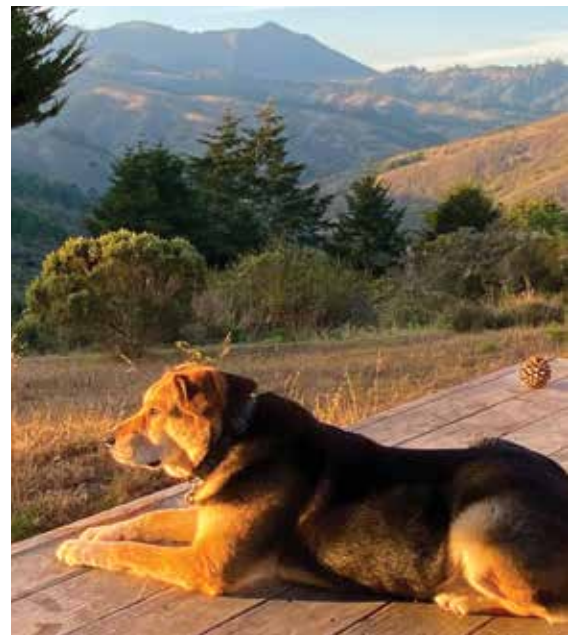
Lifelong Muir Beach resident doggy Wanda Lamooore celebrated her 15th birthday at the Muir Beach Overlook on January 15, 2025.

Though moving a bit slower these days and a bit blind and deaf, Wanda still loves her trips to Big Beach and the Overlook, where she enjoys running in the sand, watching the sunset, and meeting up with her friends Oso, Starlight, Scout, Ivy, and more.

– Denise Lamott



Young Wanda, the new pup on Starbuck



Photos by Denise Lamott

All's Fair in Arts & Crafts 2024

By Laurie Piel & Sarah Marshank

The 2024 Muir Beach Holiday Arts Fair is over and the decorations have all been taken down but the memories of this year are amazing. The Fair is the community events version of the MBVFA Memorial Day BBQ.

The BBQ funds the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department and the Fair helps fund community events like the Summer & Winter Solstices, Day of the Dead, Muir Beach Friends & Neighbors events, Paul Smith Concert Series and events yet to come now that we have a smart TV in the Community Center. With some of our profits we have already had a closet built at the MBCC for use by the fair & bistro and made a donation to The Beachcomber. After all of the bills are paid, the Fair will definitely surpass the \$1,000 we gave to the CSD last year.

The most exciting change is the addition of Sarah Marshank to the team. She has started by taking over the kitchen and will be more involved in locating new artists moving forward.

We found some amazing new artists and the weather was spectacular... what more could we ask for? It was a fabulous combination of old, and now, new friends. Once again we partnered with the California College of the Arts and gave some



Decorating day, photo by Laurie Piel



Shopping day, photo by Laurie Piel



Sarah Marshank, photo by Pam Swarts

young artists the opportunity to find out what it's like to share their art in the real world. Everyone had fun and all of the artists did well.

There are so many thanks to be given. The fair is such a labor of love from the community and my simple thank you never feels like it's enough. But my gratitude is immense!

Even before the artists have finished their work or arrived at the Center, the people who tell the world about the fair are hard at work. Janet Tumpich-Moore creates the incredible poster every year and Debra Allen provides beautiful copies designed to withstand the weather as well as distributing them to local businesses, electronically, and into the mailboxes of the community. Julie Smith, our dedicated webmaster, remakes the website each year and the inevitable last minute changes are a ton of work. Denise Lamott gets out the publicity to the entire bay area and new this year, Laura Pandapas worked with Denise

Continued on next page

Holiday Arts Fair *continued*

for a two pronged approach... so, many thanks to Laura for joining the team.

Those that swing a hammer or help on set up days are never seen so their donation of time is from the heart ... my heartfelt thanks to Susannah Kennedy, Steve Somers, and Amy Utstein for their time and hard work.

The food scene was delicious and seamless this year. Sarah & I decided not to ask the community to donate savory contributions. Instead, I made a chicken vegetable soup, Nina Vincent & Julie Smith made chili, Nicole Emert made a vegan soup and Gabriel Leis, once again, fed the attendees with his yummy burritos. His contributions to all of the community events cannot be underestimated.

Community donations made via SignUpGenius were only for sweets, and boy, were they yummy and plentiful, Each year we try to make the kitchen a little easier. We think the overlapping team transitions, the standardized price list, and Sarah's steady presence so that I could manage the rest of the fair helped a lot. Sarah will work on the request process for next year so that sign up is a bit easier. The many people donating food were: Beth Begault, Suzanne Bender, Lori Brachial, Peggy Chiang, Beatrice Chorinsky, Nicole Emert, Chris Grove, Leigha and Ella Heydt, Danny Hobson, Ellen Litwiller, Outi Onorato, Barbara Piotter, Barbara Poole, Karen Roeper, Liz Salin, Alecia Singer, Julie Smith, Bethany Villere, Nina Vincent and Kerry Wynn. Our deep apologies if we've forgotten someone.

The Kitchen's running team were: Beth & Durand Begault, Suzanne & Scott Bender, Marilyn Laatsch, Alecia Singer, Barbara Piotter, Ralph Rogers & Liz Salin, Melissa Lasky, Janice Kubota, Samantha Melendy, Steve Marshank, Nicole Emert, Pam Swarts, and Laura Van Amburgh.

Without the folks that head up the community tables, the fair would not exist. So, as always, incredible thanks to Alexis Chase who took on the Junior Artisans table AGAIN. Beatrice & Nico Chorinsky, Tracy Coley, Lora Gale, Shoshanna Kirk, Danny Rauh and Heidi Stubler oversaw the Junior Artisans table. The Junior Artisans, not surprisingly, had some of the most fun items for sale. We had some new folks at the table, some moved up to their own table and we also added the next generations of the Friedmans. Our Jr. Artisans were Paige & Callie Brown, Nico Chorinsky, Anabelle, Miles & Ben Coley, Elliot Gale, Chloe Kirk, Vincent Piazza and Anna Rauh.

This year we had five people sign up as Floaters which gave me and others a break... thank you to Liz Salin, Barbara Poole, Kate Somers, Amy Utstein, Nina Vincent...and I am personally grateful to Charlene Modena.

As ever, the Beverage Bar was a hub of activity and would not be the same without Steve Shaffer, Harvey Pearlman, and to keep it in the family, the addition of TJ Pearlman.

There is more than one way to support the fair and financial donations are a major part of the equation. In alphabetical order our donors were: Katherine Bicer,

Leigha Heydt, John & Prital Jeffrey, Greg Kidd, Peter Lambert & Linda Lotriet, Garrett Paul and Bethany Villere. Our expenses seem to grow ever year... so thank you, thank you, thank you all!

We had some new Muir Beachers & Family artists this year ...April Camlin, Skye Collier, Belle Corbit, Alexandra Frazer, Austin Moore, Lissa Rankin and Vinja Peretto. And it's our incredible returning Muir Beach artists that continue make this fair so amazing every year... Debra Allen, Kasey Corbit, Craig Eichenbaum, Hilary Gross, Vanessa, Bea & Evie Littler, Jennifer Terra, Robin Terra and, of course, our three legacy organizations... The Garden Club, MBFVA and the Quilters. Needless to say, without them there would be no fair at all.

It's exciting to continue to work with Lynda Grose Silva and partner with the California College of the Arts to bring in up and coming talents. Just as we nurture our own Junior artisans, I've always felt that the fair should be a place where new artists can find a welcoming home. You may not know that Lynda was the Chair of the Fashion Design Program at CCA and is still a professor of critical studies there. She is a Founding member of the Union of Concerned Researchers in Fashion and a board member of <https://remake.world>. It is an honor to have her bring her knowledge, expertise and connections to the fair...and it's fun.

A good time was had by all and please welcome Sarah Marshank to the team! We look forward to seeing everyone next Dec. 6th & 7th for the Muir Beach Arts Fair 2025... see you all at the Fair!

Wicked Wicked

By Nina Vincent

they open wide
gold filled mouths
their teeth saw down trees
bite into the backside
of every woman and girl child
while greedy hands remove
affordable food
from the mouths of the hungry
and large heavy boots
stomp on the backs
of men and women
who work the fields
harvest and serve our food
love their children
sing the smells of frijoles arroz y tortillas
spicy songs
that roll off the tongues
of our beautiful immigrant neighbors
now cowering in corners
waiting
nerves sharp as glass
for the moment
the cold hands of ICE
steal them from their families
and our communities.

they make greed great again
with bully and bluster
heavy hands around the throat
of an already dying democracy
they promise never to leave
to create a path of destruction
wide and long
through the middle
of our children's future
while we stand mouths agape
wondering
what we can do

how we can stop
the cold calculated destruction
of the planet
the killing
of our black brothers and sisters
the persecution
of people celebrating
who and how they love.

i want
the privilege of these tears
raging down my white face
to grow gardens of
humanity and hope
resistance and revolt
instead
my impotent voice
pens words on paper
that burn crumple and fade
into the earth
while my sorrow
puddles useless
and mothers reach out
for their children
whose tears run scared
down their tiny brown cheeks
as they watch
in terror
arms extended
their mothers and fathers
brothers and uncles
escorted
out of a country
that throws them off its back
in a rodeo of racism and hatred
too wild to ride
too furious to survive.

An Invitation to Gather: Women of Muir Beach

By Yeschi Neumann, Nina Vincent, Karen Roeper, and Sarah Marshank

As the world stage becomes increasingly uncertain and the governance of our country is shifting in unsettling ways, the interest in the role and importance of community is alive again in Muir Beach. Muir Beach has long been a thriving and unique community, with its own trajectory of growth and governance. This moment presents us with an opportunity for renewal, revival, and recalibration.

What does it mean to be a community? To be in community? To truly be a member?

In this spirit of community, we invite the women of Muir Beach to come together. Muir Beach women have come together in a variety of ways for a long time and have made important contributions to our community. Let's gather, see who we are now, explore our dreams, and consider what we might create together. What can we do, as women of this unique place, to inspire and strengthen our community? What can we do to have fun, learn from one another, generate deeper connections, and discover more about ourselves and each other?

On Thursday, January 9th, we met from 6:30–9:00 PM at the MBCC, and will continue meeting on the first Thursday of every month to connect and co-create. These gatherings are for any and all Muir Beach women who wish to join. No obligation, no RSVP—just come when it works for you.

What might we actually do, you ask? In February we will learn about Internal Family Systems from Lissa Rankin. Plans for March and beyond are open. We imagine that we might dance, invent, cook, paint, read (or write) poetry, or embark on any other creative endeavor that arises from our collective imagination. We discussed clothes swaps, and movie nights, soul collaging, and even simply sharing stories around the hearth. We invite you to bring your ideas and help shape the events. Let's dream, build, and enjoy the gifts of community together.

The invitation is simple: Show up. Be part of something beautiful and meaningful. Let's discover who we are and what we can do—together.

We can't wait to see you there.



Photo created by ChatGPT

Move, Groove, and Connect: Muir Beach's Mindful Movement Gathering

By Alecia Singer and Sarah Marshank

The Muir Beach Community Movement Gathering (MBCMG), launched by Alecia Singer and Sarah Marshank, is not your typical dance class or social dance party. Instead, it's a mindfulness practice rooted in music and movement—a space where the community comes together to connect, explore, and play in a minimally structured, organic way.

Drawing inspiration from Gabrielle Roth's **Five Rhythms** and Vin Marti's **Soul Motion**, the gathering offers a dynamic, heart-centered experience. Both Five Rhythms and Soul Motion are practices that emphasize mindful movement, encouraging participants to connect with their bodies, emotions, and the present moment. These approaches celebrate the innate wisdom of the body, inviting freedom of expression without judgment or expectation. Plus, it's super fun!

Communities have gathered through music and movement for millennia, and MBCMG continues this timeless tradition in our own community center. It's an opportunity for Muir Beachers to come together in a new way — one that includes silence and sound, stillness and dynamic motion, all within the container of community and connection.

We begin with meeting and greeting one another. Then our gathering unfolds over 55 – 60 minutes with a thoughtfully curated playlist that offers a thematic arc:

- Beginning with gentle, slow rhythms to ease into the practice,
- Building gradually to dynamic and alive tempos,
- Concluding with a smooth cool-down to bring the experience full circle.

You're invited to listen deeply and let your body guide you. The music's rhythms — fluid, staccato, chaos, lyrical, and silence — create space to explore, express, and release emotions. No choreography, no following — just your inner rhythm leading the way.

We conclude with a brief sharing of our experience before we head out to meet the day!

Whether you're a seasoned mover or someone exploring this kind of practice for the first time, the gathering welcomes you exactly as you are. Sarah and Alecia are always open to field questions and receive feedback. For example, feel free to suggest specific songs for the playlist; your input adds to the collective experience.

Come join us in creating a space where mindfulness meets movement, where we connect with ourselves and each other through the universal language of music and rhythm. Right now we meet the first Friday of each month from 10 - 11:30 am, but are open to considering adding more days depending on what people want.

We can't wait to see you there!



Photo created by ChatGPT



MBVFD JANUARY 29, 2025 CALL LOG BY DAVID TAYLOR

Since our last report in October we have run 21 calls. One of these was a medical emergency in our community. This call will not be described in any way in the Beachcomber given the small size of our community and our professional and legal obligations regarding confidentiality.

11/22/24 16:41 Tree down blocking Frank Valley Rd. – Brad Eigsti, Chris Gove, Sefton Murray, Jon Rauh, Jeff Rediger, David Taylor

11/30/24 12:25 Cyclist with hip fracture Dias Ridge Trail – Brad Eigsti, Chris Gove, Jeff Rediger

12/14/24 12:00 Tree down Greene Lane – Chris Gove, Jon Rauh

12/15/24 10:00 Tree Down Farm Road – Chris Gove, Jon Rauh

12/15/24 14:03 Bicycle accident, unable to locate (UTL) – Brad Eigsti, Chris Gove

12/17/24 16:38 22 year old male fall from rocks on Big Beach – Maurice Conti, Chris Gove, Sefton Murray, Jon Rauh, David Taylor



*America's most picturesque fire rescue operation.
Photo by David Taylor*

12/27/24 07:00 Vehicle submerged Pacific Way floodwaters – David Taylor

12/27/24 07:30 Tree down Frank Valley Rd., unable to remove due to size – David Taylor

12/27/24 08:30 Public Assist at Pelican Inn due to flooding – Jon Rauh, David Taylor

12/27/24 10:00 Wires down Shoreline Hwy – Jon Rauh, David Taylor

12/29/24 04:30 Car in ditch Shoreline Hwy no injuries – Chris Gove, David Taylor

12/30/24 17:05 Car accident Shoreline Hwy North of Muir Beach with severe injuries, ran landing zone for air ambulance – Brad Eigsti, David Taylor

01/08/25 19:00 Car accident Shoreline Hwy, head on collision, minor injuries – Brad Eigsti, Stella Eigsti, Chris Gove, Jeff Rediger, Jackson Sward, David Taylor

01/11/2025 10:10 iPhone activated 911 call, no merit on Deer Park Fire Road – Maurice Conti, Brad Eigsti, Chris Gove, Jon Rauh, Jeff Rediger

01/11/2025 14:15 iPhone activated 911 call no merit at Overlook – Maurice Conti, Brad Eigsti, Chris Gove, Jon Rauh, Jeff Rediger

01/14/25 11:30 Smoke check possible wildfire at Slide Ranch, all clear – Jon Rauh

01/19/25 13:30 Report of unconscious driver at roadside, all clear – Chris Gove

01/26/25 07:33 Car off road north of Slide Ranch, unoccupied – Maurice Conti, Brad Eigsti, Sefton Murray, Jon Rauh

01/26/25 11:00 Unattended fire on Little Beach – Brad Eigsti, Sefton Murray, Jon Rauh

01/28/25 08:57 57 year old male unconscious at Pelican Inn, transported Code 3/Air Ambulance not in range – Maurice Conti

Now is the Best Time of the Year to Remove French Broom from Our Yards!

By Shawn Roberts

The devastating images of the damage wreaked by the still-burning Los Angeles fires are a powerful reminder of the need to remove sources of potential fuel for wildfires from our yards in Muir Beach. As a July 2024 article by Fire Wise Marin (“The Menace of French Broom: Efforts to Eradicate a Fire Hazard in Marin,” included with this issue of the Beachcomber) indicates, French broom is one of the most noxious and invasive species of weeds in Marin County, and poses “significant fire hazards and ecological threats.”

Although French broom’s beautiful yellow flowers can be pleasing to the eye, the plants contains oils and resins that ignite easily and burn intensely, and – if left to its own devices in our yards – its seeds grow quickly and outcompete adjacent native plants, growing up to 10 feet tall in dense thickets that can serve as “ladder fuels” and block firefighters’ efforts to control and contain wildfires. Seed pods that emerge on French broom are from .75” to 1.25” in length, hairy, and usually contain 5-8 seeds which burst apart in summer and send seeds outward from the plant as far as six feet (and further than that in ocean areas where strong winds regularly blow). A large French broom weed can produce thousands of seed pods per year, with estimates suggesting a single large plant can produce over 8,000 seeds annually, making it a highly prolific seed producer due to its explosive seed dispersal mechanism. Scattered seeds remain viable for a long time, so we need to do our best to keep the plants from growing out of control, unhindered.

The good news is: we’ve had a lot of rain recently, creating an opportunity for you to work on eradicating French broom from your yards. Removing the French broom is not only possible, but it can be strangely satisfying, especially if you get it while the clay dirt common to Muir Beach is still saturated with rainfall!

According to plant experts, the best way to get rid of French broom is to pull it out by its roots, and the best time of year to successfully pull small and large French broom alike is before the yellow flowers (and accompanying seed pods) form, when the soil is moist and the ground is softer. If the plants are removed after they’ve gone to flower and starting to form seed pods, control of the new seed is important. Once seed pods have formed, pull the plants out, place them on tarps or in yard waste bags, and then carefully dispose of it in your green bins.

How to Remove French Broom

You can hire gardeners to do this work for you (hopefully ensuring that they don’t use toxic chemicals like RoundUp to remove the plants, which also harm Muir Beach wildlife), or you can commit to taking on the work yourself. For small French broom weeds, it is recommended that you straddle the weed with one foot on each side of the stem, grab the stem near the base with both hands, and then pull the stem uphill. Voila! When the weed with its long root system pops out of the soil intact, you will begin to understand what I mean when I say this weed removal can be “strangely satisfying.” When you pull and pull

Continued on next page



Preparing to hand-pull small French broom



Success! Roots of small French broom, once pulled



Weed Wrench can be used to remove large French broom

French Broom continued from previous page

and the root refuses to budge, or comes halfway out and then breaks – it’s not so satisfying, but keep with it, and with practice, you’ll get the hang of it.

For larger French broom weeds, you may want to invest in a Weed Wrench. When we first came to Muir Beach, our thoughtful neighbors Maury and Janice taught us about the dangers of French broom (along with poison hemlock and Russian thistle) and offered to lend us their

Weed Wrench to get us started at clearing our yard, which had not been tended to for several years.

When using the wrench, the gripper end of the wrench should be wrapped around the base of the weed as close to the ground as possible, and closed tightly. Next, leverage the wrench by pushing down on the long end of the wrench slowly (and again, very satisfyingly) to pull the entire root system up and out of the ground, allowing you to dispose of

the removed plant all in one piece, ideally without dropping any seed pods that may have formed on the ground surrounding the plant.

French broom that has taken root in hard-to-reach places can also be cut back, but this cutting is not recommended except in places that can’t otherwise be reached (steep slopes, etc.), because after cutting it back, it can resprout from the remaining root. It can subsequently become almost impossible to pull out by the roots, so you’ll need to keep revisiting the spot where it was cut back, to continue your eradication efforts. If you must resort to cutting it back, it is recommended that you do so in late spring or summer, when the ground has become dry and the plants are moisture-stressed, and that you cut the stem completely around the root crown, carefully removing all the seed pods from the plant so that they don’t re-seed the area.

Once you’ve removed the French broom from your yards, mulch can help suppress the seed from coming back – but if your yard is like ours, you’ll have to keep at it each year. The good news is: it is more and more satisfying each year, as you’ll see your progress.

If you’d like to try our Weed Wrench, let us know! (Contact me at s.shawn.roberts@gmail.com)



Position Weed Wrench around base of French broom plant



Weed Wrench showing root system of large French broom following removal

Additional resources:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNL2BtpTb54>

https://rcdsantacruz.org/images/brochures/pdf/French_broom_removal_v2.pdf

<https://www.marinij.com/2022/05/06/how-to-help-sweep-broom-out-of-marin/>
(this link provides a helpful photo of French broom in full bloom)

https://mjvande.info/french_broom.htm

<https://www.cityoforinda.org/DocumentCenter/View/4172/Remove-French-Broom>

MUIR BEACH

By Richard Weiner

MORNING

The ocean swaddled

In a blanket of white fog

Waiting for the sun

HOPE 1

Newborn spotted fawn

Locked in leg bent balance

Steadied by the moon

HOPE 2

Doe and spotted fawn

Feast on tender roadside shoots

Gifted by spring rains

SUNSET WAY

Enigma to some

Remnants of so much searching

Bonded by quiet beauty

ARAN

My last morning walk

With the king of Sunset Way

I left to start the day

HEART SHAPED STONES

The beach has yielded

My many head-down treasures

Soon I will return them

Coho

atmospheric river

fog drips gently

high tides wash up

bar breaks: creek to sea

tsunami

a cinquain poem to celebrate the run of water down the mountain to the sea, the gentle greening up and the hope of seasonal cycles reassuringly returning: monarch butterflies to the coast, salmon to their home stream, pelicans off shore, whales spouting and starry dark skies!

Looking at when we expect to see salmon it often seems to correspond to rain AND the real high tides of this time of year with an extra boost from the flush of huge storm events we now call atmospheric rivers!

But now we also have other influences such as the turn of events that added chinook back to the fish populations of our area and the “coho jumpstart” efforts underway as a last ditch effort to keep coho in our stream especially well-timed to complement so many restoration efforts throughout the Redwood Creek Watershed . Other efforts have brought turtles back as well as red-legged frogs, tule in the lagoon, verbena to the dunes.

Indeed, the return of salmon in mid-December on a rainy day also drew up a small number of wild fish to join them spawning throughout Redwood Creek.

A good winter leg stretcher to celebrate return of water but also “let’s see good progress” is this hike: through Muir Woods SHE 1 and 2, through the state’s middle creek reach best appreciated on the new Redwood Creek Trail alignment but peer down slope to view other habitat enhancements in channel, and then up Green Gulch Farm to see awesome efforts to bring this important tributary back and finally around the smolting waters of Big Lagoon!...as you walk to the beach pause to reflect on the importance of dunes and backwaters for baby fish, turtles and frogs!

These thoughts lead me to share a new book, *The Serviceberry Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World* by Robin Wall Kimmerer (first appeared in *Emergence Magazine* *The Serviceberry* – Robin Wall Kimmerer) which goes deep on the gift and sharing culture of the world, how we can transform our relationship and balance not to mention view of how earth sustains us and then shares many ways we can participate in return! She demonstrates this with the serviceberry and I wonder our equivalent and see obviously: coho

–*Mia Monroe*