

Wandering & Wondering

John Maybury

PULL THE PLUG

As a railfan and supporter of high-speed rail in general, it pains me to say this, but the California bullet train is a disaster before even one track has been laid. The budget for this bloated plan has risen from \$33 billion to \$80 billion in the past three years, and so far all of it has been for political spin and window dressing. Governor Brown should redirect the money to upgrades of existing rail and stop spending money on a flawed plan now infamously known as The Train to Nowhere.

HELPLESS SPECIES

We grieve for polar bears drowning helplessly in melting Arctic ice, and we wail about climate change, but we seem to be the most helpless species. We make movies and pass laws about global warming, but we can't seem to do anything to stop its deadly progress. What exactly is stopping us from saving ourselves from extinction? Do we have an inbred death wish? Is denial our defense mechanism against despair? Or are we just intellectually incapable of dealing with the prospect of global annihilation?

LOCAL AG REPORT

Locally produced Brussels sprouts, honey and lumber rose in value last year, but agriculture's overall earnings in San Mateo County contracted 3.7 percent in 2010, the third straight year of decline for local farm products, according to the County's 2010 Agricultural Crop Report. The flower and nursery trade, which makes up 83 percent of San

Mateo County's farming industry, saw a 5.3 percent drop in earnings last year, reflecting belt-tightening among recession-weary consumers and relentless competition from out-of-state and foreign producers. From artichokes to pumpkins, earnings were slightly down in most fruit, vegetable and grain categories, the only exception was the region's famous Brussels sprout crop, which increased in value by \$474,000. The overall slide in earnings was significantly less than the 8.3 percent decrease farmers saw in 2009, and some niche producers saw healthy increases in revenue. Lumber production earnings tripled from last year, the result of harvest practices that rotate between San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties; 2010 was a year with greater logging in San Mateo County. The county's beekeepers also earned more with slightly smaller production, as the price of honey jumped to \$7.86 per pound from last year's \$4.79. Honey has been in short supply, which might be a reflection of weather, the impacts of mites, pathogens and the loss of foraging ground. Greenhouse-grown potted plants edged up about 1 percent in value. The report is on the San Mateo County website under Departments, Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures/Links and Resources, Agricultural Crop Report.

HAUNTED BY HEROES

"A group of young rockers from Pacifica, Calif. are now known as the youngest rock band in the world, and although they're only in

elementary school, they've already made it big. The group is made up of five boys, ages 10 to 11, who prefer rock legends over Justin Bieber. The group was influenced so much they decided to call their band Haunted by Heroes. The band is made up of Getty, Charlie, Brandon and twins Chris and Nick. Together they're known as the youngest rock band in the world and are making waves in Los Angeles, playing at venues they normally wouldn't be old enough to enter. Later this month they'll be on the same bill as Motley Crue at the Sunset Strip Music Festival. The boys started rocking not long after they were rocked in the cradle and first met at day care. That's when they were only toddlers and drumming on toys. Then they moved onto video games, something they all agreed has helped them be better musicians. Haunted by Heroes mostly performs their own material, written by Nick." (KNBC, Los Angeles, August 11)

NOS AMIGOS

Next time I hear someone mouthing racist comments about Mexicans, I will mention that residents of San Felipe in Baja helped rescue American fishermen whose boat sank in a storm July 2 in the Gulf of California. In an interview with S.F. Chronicle editorial page editor John Diaz, one of the survivors, Bruce Marr of Walnut Creek, said: "The warmth that they showed was more powerful than the pain of the disaster. It was like healing. That's why we go down there."

FORECLOSURE HELP

San Mateo County Supervisor Rose Jacobs Gibson has been working hard to help county residents with foreclosure and other mortgage problems. Contact her office at 650-363-4570.

WORLD WIDE WEIRD

The oldest living thing in the world is a 405-year-old Icelandic clam named Ming.

NATURE BOY

Paul Donahue took these pictures (below) of a snowy plover at Linda Mar Beach and ochre sea stars at Rockaway Headlands. See these and other Pacifica flora and fauna in full color on my Pacifica Riptide blog. And please stay away from the plover breeding area on the north end of Linda Mar Beach. Off-leash dogs and even kites flown overhead can disturb the endangered bird species.

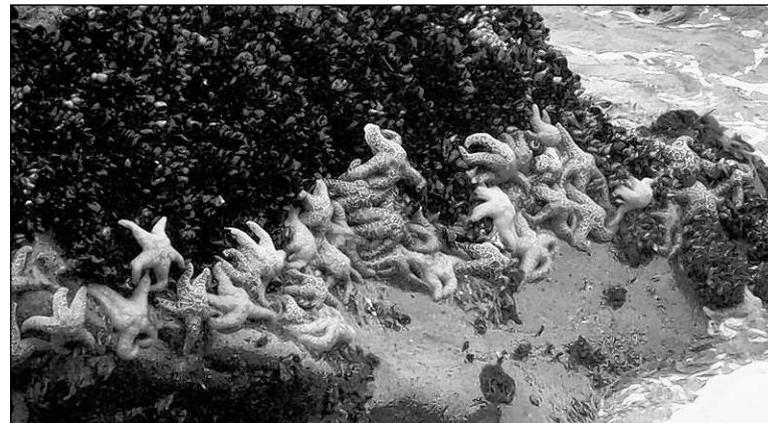
BOOK OF THE WEEK

"How to Write a Sentence: And How to Read One" by Stanley Fish (order from Florey's Book Co. on Palmetto in Sharp Park)



PHOTOS BY PAUL DONAHUE

The Snowy Plovers are back at Linda Mar Beach.



Ochre sea stars on a bed of California mussels.

SWAMI SEZ

"If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need." (Marcus Tullius Cicero)

SITSEER

•Rare, hard-to-find, and out-of-print books: addall.com/Used
•Internet Wayback Machine (digital library of books, music, videos): archive.org

MAYBURRITOVILLE

Columnist: Pacifica Tribune, Loma Prieta (Sierra Club). Blogger: Pacifica Riptide, Inner Editor. Copy-editor: Goofbuster. Teacher: Your Inner Editor. My email address: mayburrito@goofbuster.com