



Wandering & Wondering

John Maybury

WINDY PACIFICA

Judy Tugendreich emails: "Today when the wind was blowing like crazy at my house, I looked at the National Weather Service for Pacifica to find out the wind speed, and it said it was calm. Really? I wrote to Paul Deanno, chief meteorologist at KPIX, and asked why that website says it is calm, and I included a 10-second video of the trees dancing in my backyard. He told me that the wind measurement for Pacifica is taken somewhere between Highway 1 and Interstate 280, which does not really give an accurate picture of the coast, and one should check conditions at Half Moon Bay for a better idea of what's happening on the coast. That said 11-15 mph. I would guess the gusts were closer to 25 mph."

BARKING DOGS

Barkingdogs.net is a comprehensive source for information on chronic barking and the impact it has on human health. Whether your dog barks disruptively, your neighbor's dog is pushing you beyond your limits, or you are a government administrator looking for an abatement program that works, you'll find the answer at barkingdogs.net.

BIRD IS THE WORD

One of the most enjoyable ways to enjoy nature and help the environment at the same time is to feed wild birds in your yard. All you need is a bird feeder or three, birdseed, and a birdbath. Hardware stores, pet stores, grocery stores, and online stores stock these items. The best buy on birdseed I have found is Costco's 40-pound bag for about \$17. Black oil sunflower seed seems to be most birds' favorite food. In my busy backyard, I am seeing blue jays, ringneck doves, sparrows, chickadees, to-

whees, finches, starlings, and a few yet-unidentified others. For guidance on proper feeding, Cornell University Ornithology Department is an excellent online resource, as is the Peninsula chapter's Sequoia Audubon Society website. Birdwatchers know that the last four letters of Google are "ogle."

BE A (SAFE) BURNER

Pressure-treated wood is treated with a combination of chemicals including arsenic, and must never be burned in open fires. To identify it, look for dimples or staplelike holes and a greenish tint on unprotected areas. (Warning: Once this toxic wood is exposed to the air, it loses the identifying greenish tint.) Most outdoor lumber sold in home stores and lumberyards before early 2004 was pressure-treated. When burned, it releases toxins in high concentrations in the smoke and ash. ALSO: Do not burn plywood, packaging material, plastic, metal, foil, cans, and batteries; they release toxic gases and residue. Burn only unpainted, untreated, natural wood. Do not use lighter fluid or other accelerants to ignite fires. They are strictly prohibited at beaches and parks. Light fires only in established fire rings, extinguish fires completely with water, and never cover them with sand, because someone could come along and step on your hot coals many hours later. Information: epa.gov and parks.ca.gov

SWAMI SEZ

"True humility is not thinking less of yourself. It is thinking of yourself less." (C.S. Lewis)

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