

HUNTERS, FARMERS, BIRDWATCHERS

After January, millions of migratory geese and ducks will depart their midway rest stops in Sacramento Valley rice fields and head south for warmer climes until spring. Now is your last chance this winter to drive up to Gray Lodge, Colusa, and other wildlife refuges within sight of the Sutter Buttes. S.F. Chronicle outdoors columnist Tom Stienstra recently wrote about the wildlife spectacle in the valley (about three hours from the Bay Area). Tom's January 12 column (sfgate.com) describes how he and fellow duck hunters out in their duck blinds often just lay down their shotguns for a while and watch in wonder as flocks of birds fly overhead, moving from one body of water to another. An unusual partnership between duck hunters and birdwatchers provides revenue from sales of state and federal duck stamps to help support the bird refuges. Another unusual partnership between rice farmers and birdwatchers/hunters has changed the valley environment in a positive way. Instead of burning off harvested rice fields as they did in years past, polluting the air and water and soil, now the farmers flood their fields after the fall harvest and welcome the wintering birds to hang out, eat the leftovers, and leave behind their droppings as free fertilizer for the fields. It's a perfect example of a win-win-win.

WARNING SIGNS OF TYRANNY

Former Secretary of Labor and UC Berkeley public policy professor Robert Reich wrote a wonderful syndicated column Jan. 15 on what to look for when some tyrant tries to take over a democracy: The tyrant exaggerates his mandate

to govern. He repeatedly claims massive voter fraud. He calls his opponents “enemies.” He turns the public against journalists and the media. He holds few press conferences, preferring mass rallies and unfiltered statements. He tells big lies, but calls his opponents “liars.” He blames economic troubles on immigrants and minorities. He threatens mass deportations and travel bans. He attacks labor unions and opposition parties. He appoints his relatives to powerful positions. He surrounds himself with private security forces. He puts military generals into top civilian posts. He makes personal alliances with foreign dictators. He makes no distinction between public property and his own private property for profit. As Reich says: “You’ve been warned!” (Source: robertreich.org)

LAZY LASAGNA

Saw this one on a TV food program. Brown the ground beef, then layer it in a casserole dish with marinara sauce, pasta, and cheese (ricotta and mozzarella). Pour a cup of water over the whole thing, cover with aluminum foil, and bake 45 minutes at 450 degrees. Let it cool, then chow down.

VOICE FOR THE POOR & PROSECUTED

North Peninsula chapter ACLU meets Thursday, January 26 at 6:30 p.m. to discuss criminal justice in San Mateo County. Location: Silicon Valley Community Foundation, 1300 South El Camino Real, San Mateo. Info: 650-286-7791, email npenacluu@gmail.com, or visit website www.ACLUNP.org

SWAMI SEZ

“Wherever you go, there you are.” (Swami Umami)

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