

HERE, KITTY, KITTY

Here on the coast and up in the coastal range, many of us may have seen or heard a mountain lion in the brush or alongside a hiking trail. Despite park rangers' sound advice to stand your ground aggressively and open up your jacket to look larger, etc., we probably react in one of our two most basic fight-or-flight instincts: freeze on the spot or run like hell. I don't know about you, but as a journalist, I have never been one to run away from a good story. Now researchers at the University of California at Santa Cruz have confirmed what I knew all along: The best defense is a good offense, i.e., stand tall and speak truth to power. Apparently, mountain lions hate the sound of human voices. To be fair and balanced, the UCSC researchers played audio snippets from broadcasts by Rush Limbaugh, Rachel Maddow, Glen Beck, and Amy Goodman. The lithe predators were equally spooked by all four voices, and ran for their lives, abandoning their nice juicy deer-carcass meals. Just to test their hypotheses, the UCSC Puma Project biologists played tapes of frogs croaking, which the mountain lions ignored, continuing to feed on the venison. Since 1920, when the mountain lion population was down to about 600 due to bounty hunting, their numbers have risen to about 5,000 today under state and federal protection. These beautiful but stealthy felines are also known as cougars, panthers, pumas, and catamounts, but just remember that whatever you call them, they will probably run away at the sound of your voice. Get more information about mountain lions at santacruzpumas.org.

CALTRANS FOLLOW-UP

Okay, last week I hit the Cone Zone pretty hard with an item called "Shame on Caltrans." I detailed how dirty and dangerous Highway 1 is from the Tom Lantos Tunnels at Devil's Slide all the way down to Linda Mar, with trash, weeds, tree branches, rocks, and mud on the paved shoulders of the road. Well, guess what! The day after the paper came out, Caltrans apparently got the message and did a few cosmetic things, mainly mowing some of the grass and weeds alongside the road, most notably the ones I mentioned were blocking out the WELCOME TO PACIFICA sign. So that's all good. But they still left a lot of the debris (human-caused and natural) on the paved shoulders so that bicyclists and pedestrians cannot travel safely on the road, forced to swerve out into traffic. You can just imagine the deadly consequences when one day someone speeds around one of those blind corners of the "S" curve and wipes out Stevie Spandex on a ten-speed or Harry Homeless carrying a bag of groceries from Safeway up to the hillside tent camp. (Yes, Virginia, it exists!) Also, as of this writing, Caltrans still has not removed the way-

outdated road signs on the uphill (southbound side). They say: ROAD MACHINERY AHEAD, SLIDE AHEAD, ROAD WORK AHEAD. I have two words for the state Department of Transportation: shovel, broom.

SWAMI SEZ

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has actually taken place.” (George Bernard Shaw)

MAYBURRITOVILLE

- Email: Mayburrito@Goofbuster.com
- Blog: PacificaRiptide.com
- Copy Editor: Goofbuster.com