

Wandering and Wondering

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RANTING & RAVING

Before I thought up the name for my column back in 1999 (Wandering & Wondering), I thought about calling it Ranting & Raving. But back then I was young and crazy, whereas now I am a seasoned veteran of the media wars. So at this time of year, let us think deep thoughts about who we are and where we are going. Since I started this column (and then in 2007 an environmentally focused hyperlocal blog called *Pacifica Riptide*), I have covered mainly coastal stories. But we do not live in a vacuum. Environmental issues particularly are interconnected. So I hope to do more reporting on the global environment that we are all a part of: wildlife, pollution, stewardship, conservation, land use, open space, etc. I aim to connect local stories to the bigger picture: environmental issues on the regional, state, national, and international level--but always with our unique coastal perspective.

STARFISH DIE-OFF

Nature and wildlife photographer Paul Donahue sent me some scary photos to post on *Pacifica Riptide*, along with his comments: "Ochre sea star is the species of starfish that used to be common in the rocky intertidal zone around *Pacifica*. Despite their English name, these starfish come in a range of colors: ochre, lavender, orange, brick red. In the vertical stratification of intertidal invertebrates along the rocky shore, these sea stars are normally found in the zone just below the band of California mussels. As the sea stars prey heavily on the mussels, their vertical distribution more or less defines the lower limit of the band of mussels. Ochre sea stars used to be so common that at this time of year, several wintering glaucous-winged gulls specialized in feeding on them, spending most of their day seeking them out and then trying to swallow them. Recently, a mysterious starfish die-off has hit many areas along the West Coast of North America, from Alaska to Southern California, killing ochre sea stars as well as other species. The die-off is caused by something called 'sea star wasting syndrome,' but the pathogen causing this wasting and die-off is still unknown. I took advantage of low tide December 5 to walk around the rocky shore of Rockaway Headland to see if our local ochre sea stars have been impacted by the mysterious die-off. Unfortunately, I found that they have. I checked many large rocks that I know used to be covered with dozens and dozens of these starfish, but despite searching along a couple of hundred meters of shoreline, I was unable to find a single sea star."

POPPY'S CRAB SHACK

Tom Borden, founder of mobile food truck *Poppy's Crab Shack*, writes: "I wanted to keep you up to date on what's happening with *Poppy's* this season. We had a great first year but have turned the wheel over to a couple of chefs from SF, Mark Furr and Angela Chavez. Mark and Angela are seasoned in the mobile food truck biz (they ran the now closed *Smoke BBQ* truck in SF, check it out; they got great reviews) and were looking to move to HMB and start a new seafood-based mobile food business. They are a great fit to take *Poppy's* to the next level. Everything will be staying the same, although they plan to update the menu with some new seasonal items -- surf & turf is in the plans. Mark & Angela are outfitting their 1965 *Commander* food truck as we speak, and they expect *Poppy's* to be open for business in the next few weeks. Amy and I will continue to help them in the business as they are getting established. We are also

going to be releasing our 'Poppy's Crab Shack Cookbook: The Story of a Season' in the next few months. We will let you know when that happens."

BROWN GOES BICYCLING

Claudia Vilagi writes: "Have you noticed UPS-uniformed cyclists towing small trailers full of parcels in your neighborhood recently? I did a little research and discovered that they are refilling their trailers at pods strategically placed around town. The pods are refilled regularly by one of the familiar big brown trucks that used to trundle up and down the street. I think that it is rather charming to see a cyclist pedaling up the street with a trailer full of parcels, later to be seen coasting back down the hill with an empty trailer. Not only is it much more environmentally friendly, it is a whole lot quieter."

SITeseER

•Nature and wildlife: jimmyjonesphotography.com

•Real-time surf conditions: pacificwaverider.com

SWAMI SEZ

"I used to be indecisive. Now I'm not so sure."

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