

Wandering and Wondering: December 30, 2009

By John Maybury Pacifica Tribune columnist

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HAPPY NEW YEAR As we hurtle forward into the year 2010, we leave behind a decade that brought us the disastrous presidency of George W. Bush, the 9/11 terrorist attack on New York City, the stock market's worst 10 years ever, war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and reality TV. With the election last year of Barack Obama as president of the United States, many of us hoped (and still do) that a new face in the White House would make a difference in Washington. Well, the jury is still out on that one, but I (for one) have not given up. Obama faces huge odds against success, despite his party's majority hold on Congress. He has to undo eight years of damage that Bush did to the government and the country. Obama has to deal with huge federal deficits, high unemployment, military quagmires in the Middle East, global warming, and uncertainty about health care reform. The list of issues is endless. So, good luck, Mister President, and good luck to all of us as we enter a challenging new decade. Happy New Year from Wandering and Wondering, which also now begins a new decade. I started this column 10 years ago. Thanks to all my loyal readers for riding the roller coaster. Please continue to send me your news and comments: Mayburrito@goofbuster.com .

PLANES OF FAME Tim Brand and his son Evan Isenstein-Brand recently visited the Planes of Fame Museum in Chino, California, and took photos for Evan's Web site: evanflies.com . Evan says, "Unfortunately, indoor shots aren't very cool, but the museum is awesome!" He also has posted videos his father shot of the two of them flying in vintage aircraft up the coast from Pacifica to the Golden Gate Bridge. Check 'em out on Evan's site, YouTube, and Pacifica Riptide.

BIG YEAR Wild Equity Institute welcomes all Bay Area residents to its Kickoff Celebration for the Golden Gate National Parks (GGNP) Endangered Species "Big Year" Celebration on Saturday, January 9 from 1 to 4 p.m. Earlier, a bike ride to search for California Sea Otters takes place from 9:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m., ending up at the celebration location, Sports Basement, 610 Old Mason Street, Presidio, San Francisco. The bike ride begins at the Bazaar Café, California Street at 21st Avenue, San Francisco. GGNP contain more endangered species than any other National Parks in continental North America— more than Yellowstone, Yosemite, Kings Canyon, and Sequoia combined. The Big Year is a race against time to see and help save GGNP's 36 endangered species. This is a yearlong competitive event that helps people see local endangered species and empowers them to take actions that help these species recover. More than

\$2,000 in prizes will be awarded throughout the year to people who see and help save the largest number of endangered species in the Park. The kickoff celebration will feature free food from Arizmendi Bakery, and free drinks and coupons from the Sports Basement. After a short ceremony, bird experts will lead a short hike to search for the Western Snowy Plover at the Crissy Field Wildlife Protection Area, San Francisco's very own endangered shorebird. The 2010 Endangered Species Big Year will feature trips to see and advice to help save wondrous and imperiled plants and animals like the California Red-legged Frog, sometimes called "Twain's Frog" because Mark Twain featured it in his short story *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* ; the San Francisco Garter Snake, the most beautiful and imperiled serpent in North America; the Presidio Clarkia, a beautiful wildflower found in only a few locations on Earth; Coho salmon, which have declined precipitously in recent years; and the Northern Spotted Owl, a curious owl that has had its habitats decimated and is also facing threats from a more aggressive owl species that has invaded the Spotted Owl's natural habitats. This is the second biennial edition of the Endangered Species Big Year. In 2008, more than 14,000 people participated in the program. Since 2008, one previously endangered species, the Brown Pelican, has recovered and has been delisted, but four new endangered species have been found in the GGNP: the Myrtle's Silverspot Butterfly, the Gowen Cypress, the North American Green Sturgeon, and the Black Abalone. For more information and to sign up for the GGNP Endangered Species Big Year, visit wildequity.org .

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SWAMI SEZ "A pirate may tell any tale of swashbuckling without being called on the details, as long as at least 51 percent of the story is true." (Pirate Law #63)

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