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• Life in LAMORINDA •

Mountain Lion Sightings in Lafayette

By Cathy Tyson

Mountain lions have recently been sighted at the Lafayette Community Park and also along the Lafayette-Moraga Trail. While this type of cat is not something you see every day, they are a natural part of this region's environment, according to Jennifer Russell, Director of Lafayette's Parks and Recreation Department.

Wildlife ecologist Steve Bobzien with the East Bay Regional Park District emphasizes putting sightings in perspective, "Mountain lion attacks are extremely, extremely rare. If you think about the millions of people who are recreating in their habitat every day, the cats are doing a good job of avoiding people." He noted an interesting contrast: "There are over 950 serious dog bites per day in the U.S. that require medical attention." And they call dogs man's best friend. In the entire United States between 1890 and 2004 there were a total of 88 re-

ported confirmed attacks on humans, according to the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

Over half of California is mountain lion habitat and they can be found wherever deer, their primary prey are found, according to the California Department of Fish and Game. Mountain lions are the loners of the animal kingdom - quiet, solitary and typically avoid people.

What to do if you or your kids are out and about in the Community Park or hiking in the area? Lafayette's Parks, Trails and Recreation Department, the East Bay Regional Park District and the Department of Fish and Game all offer this advice:

- Don't let small children wander out of sight
- Keep pets on a leash
- Make noise
- Do not approach the lion
- Do not run from the lion
- Face the lion, wave your arms

slowly and speak in a loud voice

- Try to appear larger
- Do not crouch down or bend over
- Back away slowly, giving the lion an opportunity to escape
- Fight back if attacked

Coyotes are a different story. "They tend to frequent the urban - wildland interface and are very adaptable. You want to demonstrate that approaching humans has a negative effect," said Bobzien. He recommends yelling, screaming and throwing rocks at them.

In a statement, Director Russell said, "If you see a mountain lion and it's just walking through the park, call the Parks, Trails and Recreation Office at (925) 284-2232 and give them specific information on the size of the animal, the location and the direction it was headed. If the animal is acting aggressively, call local police dispatch at (925) 284-5010."

Ham Radio Operators Put to the Test

By Sophie Braccini



Canyon's Emergency Operation Center (Jonathan Goodwin in red) Photo Sophie Braccini

"Imagine a big fire raging in our highly fire sensitive areas, for each one of us the first concern will be to know which evacuation routes we can take," says Marty Heyman, a volunteer emergency coordinator for Orinda. The evacuation routes do not stop at the border of each city, so on February 21 emergency volunteers from Canyon, Lafayette, Montclair, Moraga and Orinda joined with the local fire departments to conduct a test of their ability to communicate in an emergency. Amateur, or 'ham,' radio operators are key to the success of such communication, because tra-

ditional land lines and cell phones might be inoperative.

The test sites were the Emergency Operation Centers (EOC) in each of the five areas. Participating vehicles, equipped with radios, patrolled freeways and main arteries from Mountain Blvd. in Montclair, to Walnut Creek, Claremont and all the main sites in between.

"The test was very successful," said Jonathan Goodwin from the Canyon EOC, "with all our hills there are some sites that cannot reach other specific points, but through relays and/or amplification

we can get through to each other."

An Orinda neighborhood equipped with Family Radio Service (FRS --an improved walkie talkie radio system) was included in the test. "It is critical that neighborhoods get equipped and become capable to communicate with the emergency amateur radio network," says Heyman, "when major disaster happen, it has been observed that 90% of the time neighbors are rescued by neighbors, they need to have the tools to communicate their situation and emergencies when the normal communication network fail."

The group encourages residents to get trained as amateur radio operators and/or join CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) and get a FRS system. For more information contact CERT, www.lamorindacert.org

Amateur Radio Training
Free six week course
Begins May 6th 7-9pm
Mt. Diablo Amateur Radio Club
The Salvation Army-Concord
Contact: John Primus, KI6OUY
primus@astound.net
(925)825-7670

Moraga and Orinda Council Members Talk Trash

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The first stop of the day was at Pacific Rim, a CCCSWA contractor in Benicia that handles recyclables such as what we put in our brown containers as well as the curb side recycling they provide twice yearly.

"I am environmentally conscientious and a huge recycler," said Mendonca, "but not an expert, and during this visit I've learned a lot."

The group was shown the highly mechanized and sophisticated sorting process that allows the contractor to prepare bundles of paper for China, extract glass and metal for reprocessing and send plastic bottles on their way to reuse. About 93% of what they receive gets recycled, the rest ends up in the landfill.

The second stop took the team to Martinez, to the Contra Costa Transfer and Recovery Station that's owned by Allied Waste, a company that holds franchise agreements with CCCSWA.

"I was most impressed with the care taken by Allied Waste to do two things; first, to very thoroughly sort the stuff coming in to them, that is the recyclables and the garbage, to make sure that both get to the appropriate place so as to maximize recycling, and second, to move materials in and out so quickly," said Smith.

The third stop at the Pittsburg landfill was most impressive by its

size, efficiency and oddly surreal beauty. The visitors were greeted by the site engineers who presented their topology and technology. "I was most impressed by the landfill," said Mendonca, "it looked more like a park, and their complex process deals with efficiency and safety with such enormous amounts of waste."

The group took a car tour along the vast acreage of the site, seeing the almost-operative methane facility that will produce three megawatts of electricity starting in April, and the wetland that has been restored for local children. Nestled in the bare hills, the section of land where the garbage is dropped is signaled by flocks of hungry seagulls that tour it endlessly.

From the site, the view expands to the Bay, homes and a windmill farm. "I appreciated the fact that the landfill operators cover the garbage twice daily, so as to minimize the impact on the neighboring communities," commented Smith, "I really thought they were acting as good neighbors."

The site will be in service until 2053, after that date it will become a golf course, or return to its original state of pasture.

The afternoon was dedicated to a presentation of the 2009-2010 strategic goals of CCCSWA and discussion of possible ways to increase the amount of recyclable material in our waste stream.

Steve Glazer said, "Orinda's recycling rate has slipped below 50% of its trash flow and is failing to meet the state requirements. Our community is very environmentally sensitive and if they can be made aware of our poor standing and the easy ways to reuse and recycle our trash, we can do much better."

Smith added, "In order to increase our diversion rate--both because the state requires us to and because it's the right thing to do for our community-- we have to concentrate on new areas. To me, that means increasing our food waste recycling by residents, and also including expanding the CCCSWA commercial food waste recycling program to Orinda restaurants, better control over the disposal of construction waste, and we need to seriously expand recycling by businesses."

The situation in Moraga is a bit more positive. "With respect to recycling, the specific goal for Moraga at present is to continue meeting our AB 939 solid waste diversion requirement (i.e., achieve at least a 50% diversion rate on recyclables and green waste so that these materials do not go to landfill)," said Trotter.

Mendonca concluded, "Managing our waste is a great responsibility," she said, "this is the right thing to do and another very important way to take care of the planet."



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