



Your Hosts for Launch Point, the Firesiders

June 2021

On my drive in from Solvang to Lake Cachuma, I passed two very large vultures pecking at something up on the embankment to my left. Largest vultures I had ever seen! Or were they? In less than a mile, a real turkey vulture swooped in front of me, much smaller than those two. Were they condors? I recalled years ago going on a Nature Tour on the lake with a naturalist who expounded on the release of condors in the nearby mountains. Wow!

Then before I ever got out of my rig, a Western Scrub Jay, several European Starlings and a female Western Bluebird chatted up my arrival. As I walked around my space, a dirt mound had a little earthquake. Shortly, a brown, furry head with little eyeballs and busy front feet, pushed up, reached over for green leaves from a filaree (Heron's bill). After a quick snip, he backed up and was gone, leaves and all. He did this several more times with several of us watching and then pushed a lot of his dirt back up the hole, plugging it. It was a Western (Botta's) gopher. He returned later and again the next day from a nearby hole. I heard many reports of you being entertained by one or more.

Starlings picked through the heavy mulch around the young oak trees inside the wire cages. The cages are to protect the oak seedlings from deer nibbling. This time of the year, starlings are shiny black with yellow beaks. Come winter their beaks will have turned dark and their feathers will have white tips. The female will often lay her eggs in a ready made nest, someone else's.

While feeding my turtle babies (18), I offered a piece of romaine to the gopher who only hesitated a second. He seemed to have several apartments with tunnel connections. I checked my "Mammal Finder" which said the males don't tolerate other males nearby, but several of you said that when sitting around the campfire you could see more than one popping up. Maybe you were "Gopher Whisperers"?

More birds! We saw more acorn woodpeckers on the Nature Walk down toward Drake Cove as well as swooping swallows. Perhaps that was a song sparrow in the trees along the roadway. A ground squirrel ran away from us. Looking through the trees above Drake Cove we saw a Canada Goose family coming in off the lake to the cove. A parent in the lead with at least 5 goslings and a parent as tail gunner. They came ashore to poke around in the weeds and reeds. Close by was a Great Egret standing patiently waiting for his or her lunch to wiggle around one's feet. The breeze stirred its breeding plumage, long graceful white feathers emanating from its head and neck. Meanwhile, a Ruddy Duck was having a wash in deeper water and a song sparrow was warbling from a nearby tree. Beneath some trees we could see poison oak and were careful. The orange Sticky Monkey Flowers had smallish blooms, probably due to a lack of rainfall. The chia and sage did better in this regard, probably more adapted to dry conditions. An alligator lizard scooted away.

Back in camp, the Great-tailed Grackles were raising a ruckus. Males are a shiny black with a keel for a long tail. The females are about 2/3 their size and are brown. Quiet as can be, the Eurasian Collared Doves were a soft beige, with a half crescent on the back of their necks, black wing tips, and grayish pink feet. They usually moved in pairs or trios and had a soft coo. They came for my scattered bird seed as I tried to see their feet. More cliff swallows were purging the air of critters. They nest on a cliff face on the other side of the lake. Over time many nests have been carved into that cliff face. The swallows fly right at it, stopping flight a nanosecond



before they would crash. A turkey vulture soared over us one day, but could find nothing dead or dying. So he continued his glide. Cachuma is known for its Bald Eagles. To see them you need to go boating to the far end of the lake and be patient, very patient. When we return here, it will be winter and some birds will have migrated, but perhaps, just enough will hang on to make our walk interesting.

Lurlie Edgecomb #2285
aka Mother Nature



Photos by Charlene Tutterrow

Dog walk with Jo Jo

Jo Jo Stanford led us on a walk around the camp and gave us great tips on how to handle our pets.



Lasagna potluck dinner was a hit and everyone had a great time being together again.



Our Craft Fair is still a swap meet style event until the covid restrictions are lifted.



Lake Catchuma Mickey / Minnie Tournament May 14, 2021



Forty teams were formed with an even number of Mickey's and Minnie's. Steve Tivy said that the temperature would be cool but tolerable and it was and yours truly felt comfortable wearing a jacket.

Our participants brought out 9 sets of boards so we were able to get most players off to a quick start.

We had First-timer Christine Factor and her Grandson Cody playing and also Second-timers David and Linda Cheek joining in on the action.

The Minnie's came down to a battle between Team #1 Carol Potts and Carol Kratzer against Team #17 Peggy Zabel and Velna Wells. Team #1 had to beat Team #17 two times as Team #17 had not lost a game in our double elimination Tournament.

Peggy and Velna were on their game and were victorious and won the first play-off game, winning the Minnie Division of the tournament.

In the Mickey Division Team #1 Ken Palmer and Claude Potts had to play-off against Team #9 Harry Earle and Cody Factor. Neither team had a loss so it was necessary to play a best of two out of three.

Ken and Claude were on their game and won their games with a hard fought battle.

Now it was time to play the Minnies.

This was a best of two out of three to determine the winner of the tournament. The Minnies put up a good battle but the Mickeys were just too much for them and were defeated in 2 straight games.

Congratulations to Ken and Claude for a tournament well played.



Cachuma Lake Fishing

Terry Joe, Bill Arthur, Herb Johnson and Dave Hurley tried their luck on the water. Bass was the target and a decent number was caught and released by all. And have pictures to prove it.



Dave Hurley went to New Mexico and fished for trout the following week and caught and released dozens of Rainbow and Brown Trout. True story!!!



Caravan Anniversaries



Claude and Carol Potts — 100 Caravans



Betty Boschma — 300 Caravans



Boat Dock



Nice Restaurant



Beautiful Lake



Potluck



Potluck Photo by Donna LaPorte

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From the Editor

The deadline for articles is the Sunday following each Caravan. Thank you for your continuing support in the production of the Caravaner.

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