



# ***WEST MARIN WILD***

**By Jeff Miller**

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## **Bestia April Balatro**

Well, it certainly is shaping up to be a weird and wacky year for wildlife in west Marin. Some of the more interesting developments just in the last few months:

In January the wildlife restoration group Wild In The City announced their desire to reintroduce grizzly bears to downtown San Francisco. The financial district of course is built on landfill that was once Bay wetlands where grizzlies, elk and wolves roamed. Responding to fears of human-bear conflicts, a Wild In The City spokesperson said, "No one will notice if a few bankers or stockbrokers get eaten. The suit and tie crowd is overpopulated anyhow and the herd needs to be culled. All we want to do is reintroduce a top predator to help restore the balance." Welcome back to the food chain.

The National Park Service appears to be backing off of their controversial decision to exterminate the introduced fallow and axis deer from Point Reyes National Seashore. The NPS approval last year of a program to eradicate the deer through contraceptive injections and shooting met with public outrage. Apparently the costs of the program and technical difficulties with the contraceptives have forced the NPS to switch to a new strategy for reducing the herds: a "Just Say No to Sex" program for the deer. According to a NPS spokesman, "the Bush administration cut our wildlife management budget, but all this grant money is available for faith-based initiatives and an ungulate abstinence program was the easiest project to get funded." The NPS will reportedly install life-sized naked photos of Vice President Cheney throughout the park, and the deer are expected to react by losing all interest in reproduction.

Human attendance at the park is expected to drop off dramatically as well.

In a stunning and ironic twist of events, four Point Reyes Bird Observatory biologists reported in early March that they were caught in mist nets outside their houses and banded. Said one PRBO ornithologist, who declined to be named because he thought it might 'skew the data': "Someone put up mist nets on Mesa Road and we didn't see them. Next thing I knew I was wearing this color-coded number band around my leg, and I'm pretty sure someone has been snooping around my house and recording my feeding and breeding habits as well."

There is speculation that a 2005 U.S. Army directive allowing civilian employees to use medical marijuana at work may have played a role in a surprise alternative for the Bolinas Lagoon Ecosystem Restoration Project unveiled by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at a poorly attended planning meeting last month. Conservationists and locals were baffled and amused when the Corps proposed a new project alternative that would construct a giant Slip'N'Slide from the top of Mount Tamalpais into the lagoon. "C'mon, you know it'll be fun," said Lt. Colonel Pourmore Concrete, a regional district Corps spokesman. A Corps analysis showed the water slide alternative would cost at least \$72.3 million. When pressed, Concrete acknowledged that project costs could easily reach \$186 million with overruns, but that the area's wildlife would have a "heck of a good time" migrating to the lagoon.

Oh yeah, I almost forgot. Happy April Fool's Day.

*West Marin Wild* is a sporadic column on the wildlife and natural world of West Marin. Contact me at Box 111, Bolinas.