

T H E
ECHO

January 2025



2	Matt Greenberg Elizabeth Lev	MVMCC Management Update; Directory Update Warm and Fuzzy
3-4	John Hansen	PAC PAC Letter to Residents, ROD Committee Update
4-5	Bill Davis	MVEST Taylor Swift, Marriott, and Marin Valley How Did the 2016 Hillside Fire Start?
5	Michele Rodriguez	Sprinkler Systems
6	Carolyn Corry	MAR VAL Message from Mar Val
7-8	Carolyn Corry, Susan Hoff	Event Flyers
9	John Feld	HOL HOL Message <i>HOL Community Events</i> Circle of Friends 2025 Artists Meeting <i>Last Monday Lectures: Living and Dying</i> From the Holiday Craft Fair
10	Aneesha Dillon, Timo Navsky Suzie Lahr Marty Gelman	
11	Francina LeClerq	
12	Janie Klimes	Wedding Blessing
13	Frank Simpson	Mount Diablo Sunrise
14	John Mellquist	Observe and Protect
15-17	Lorna Sass	Cheer Ups
18-19	David Gray	<i>Birds of the Month: Lesser Goldfinch and Pine Siskin</i>
20		<i>Calendar: January 2025</i>

Management Update

Retaining Walls Management has inspected three separate walls that are leaning. Temporary supports will be installed if there is any further movement.

Drainage Cleaning of the Park V-ditch gutter and catch basin is one-third complete.

A new drainage ditch is planned to evacuate standing water from the retention pond on lower Club View Drive. A Vactor truck is scheduled to remove a massive plug of debris and mud from the 10-inch drainage pipe leading to the pond.

Safety Maintenance The yearly above-ground gas leak survey, using sniffer tools and meters, was completed in November as part of our mandate to ensure a safe environment.

The quarterly sewer snake service is in progress as part of our preventative maintenance program.

The exhaust flue replacement for the pool spa heater has been scheduled. We are still addressing the ongoing issue with the pipe.

Clubhouse The ping-pong room floor has been patched. We are currently looking for a matching floor pattern to replace the damaged area.

Both heater units in the ceiling that heat and cool the Fireside Room, lobby, and library are broken and need to be replaced. This should take place in conjunction with the roof replacement. We are awaiting permission from the City of Novato. In the meantime, Management has purchased several small space heaters for the Fireside Room.



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Warm and Fuzzy



by **ELIZABETH LEV**

A huge thanks to all you wonderful neighbors who dropped off mittens, caps, socks, toothbrushes, etc., for the homeless! Such a wonderful response to help others. It will all be used and appreciated. ■

Merci Gracias Todah Thanks!

Directory Update

**Add
Email**

Mary Sue Coyne marysuecoyne@gmail.com
Karen Soltesz mssoltesz@gmail.com

Echo Deadline to Submit Articles

Email articles to Anila Manning: anilahere99@gmail.com by the 8th of the month for the next month's issue with "ECHO" as the subject.

THE ECHO 2025

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Letter to Residents

PAC

Happy New Year from the Park Acquisition Corporation Board of Directors!

January is a month of resolutions, fresh starts, and the hopeful anticipation of a year filled with growth, joy, and good news. Wishing you all a wonderful New Year!

Here are a few updates from the PAC Board regarding activities associated with the Exclusive Negotiating Agreement (ENA) with the City of Novato:

- 1. Refining Strategy:** In the year ahead, we will continue efforts to gather the necessary information to conduct meaningful, good-faith negotiations with the City regarding the purchase of MVMCC. The PAC Board will be meeting regularly in closed session with attorney Tiedemann of Goldfarb & Lipman, along with Jodi Baiyat from Resident Owned Communities USA (ROC USA) and Randy Keller with the California Center for Cooperative Development (CCCD), to develop an effective purchase strategy. These experts are helping us focus on the best approach.
- 2. Due to the City by June 30, 2025:** In accordance with the ENA, we are now working on developing a detailed financing proposal for the acquisition and operation of the Park property. Similar to the above activity, this work is also being undertaken in closed session.
- 3. Two ENA Matters Requiring Responses from the City:**
 - a.** The PAC Board completed its review of the Park title and

provided the City with a letter of title exceptions on July 15, 2024. The City responded on August 15, 2024. A follow-up call between the City attorney and the PAC attorney occurred on September 4, 2024, *during which the City attorney stated that he would follow up regarding the removal of the Payment in Lieu Agreement from the title.*

- b.** The PAC completed its analysis of Surplus Land Act compliance regarding the disposition of the Park and provided the City with an analysis on July 31, 2024. *Also during the September 4, 2024, phone call, the City attorney stated that the City would be responding to the Surplus Land Act memo shortly.*

The PAC continues to await a response from the City on both matters. In late October, attorney Tiedemann submitted an inquiry to the City pointing out that these two items remain incomplete.

New Park Projects

The MVMCC annual budget for July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, approved by the City in June 2024, includes several capital

improvement projects (CIPs). As previously reported, three of those projects have already been initiated by the City: repairing the clubhouse roof, replacing the main 12kV electrical power switch, and designing critical ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) improvements for the pool and clubhouse restrooms. A timeline for completing these projects in the first half of 2025 is forthcoming from the City.

We recently met with the City Manager to discuss initiating two additional projects — “Updated Property Assessment and Associated On-site Engineering,” and “Replacement Design and Construction Documents” for our corroding water mains and laterals. There is nothing definitive at this time, but it is very encouraging that the City Manager has agreed to begin the process to determine if these projects can be completed in the current fiscal year.

Other capital improvement projects, such as drains, V-ditches, and retaining walls, are already underway and will be reported on by Matt Greenberg, Park Manager.

Update from the Resident Ownership Discovery Committee

This year has been a very active one for the ROD Committee (RODC) as well as for residents, who stepped up and voted their support for important issues and policies related to self-empowerment and ownership. The RODC, with the continuous help of ROC USA and CCCD, has completed the necessary steps to ensure the establishment of a legal entity, the Marin Valley Cooperative, to take possession of the Park in the event of a transfer from the City. The MVMCC residents have clearly indicated their support

for moving in the direction of self-ownership, should the conditions be conducive, with an emphasis on affordability.

The ROD Committee consists of PAC/MVC Board members John Hansen and Mary Currie, as well as Serena Fisher, Alan Gump, and Dave Tetta. Dave is stepping back from the committee to focus on his health and well-being for the foreseeable future. We are very grateful to Dave for all the time and effort he has dedicated to this work. He has brought much wisdom to the discussions and organization to the multitude of documents the RODC has created in this endeavor. We will miss Dave's collaboration and unique perspective. We wish him all the best with his health and hope that he will return to the committee should his circumstances allow.

We thank the residents of MVMCC for showing up and for their support during this complicated journey toward self-ownership. We believe the effort is worth the vision of secure self-ownership in perpetuity.

The RODC wishes everyone all the best for a healthy and fulfilling 2025.

Learn What's Happening and When

To receive emailed Resident Updates, be sure to give your email address to PAC Board Secretary Carol-Joy Harris at caroljoyharris@comcast.net. You must OPT-IN to receive robocalls from Park Manager Matt Greenberg, as these calls share emergency information and critical path announcements. To OPT-IN, contact Matt at 415-883-5911 or gm.mvmcc@gmail.com.

Happy New Year!



John Hansen

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Taylor Swift, Marriott, and Marin Valley

by **BILL DAVIS**, MVEST Chair

Do dogs smile? Well, just look at their tails when you approach at a 10-foot distance, and you will know exactly where you stand in your relationship with them. The same phenomenon occurs with us humans at 10 feet. The magic of a dog's tail wagging has the same effect as the warmth of a human smile. Likewise, when a human hears the sound of a cat purring, their blood pressure falls significantly.

Of course, the opposite can also be true. A grade school and high school friend of mine once played four seasons with the Green Bay Packers championship football team under the great Coach Vince Lombardi. My friend said that Coach Lombardi had one of the most powerful and inspirational smiles he had ever seen. But he also had the most dreadful frown, which could cut through your emotions to the bottom of your gut if you missed a tackle or block. No words were necessary from the coach, who is

still revered as one of the greatest at getting players to perform beyond what they thought they were capable of. You have the same power in your smile or frown, an up-or-down nod, or a left-to-right horizontal head swivel: no words are necessary.



The positive and motivational energy of a smile cannot be overstated. You are like a 120-volt electrical outlet; your smile can energize a coffee grinder to deliver fresh grounds, heat the tea kettle, start the toaster — and light up

everyone around you — for the day. Smile, and you flip a switch. Presto, you have coffee and a friend. A smile exercises good mental hygiene; it is infectious in a positive way. We here in Marin Valley Mobile Country Club have an outstanding example in our Park Manager, Matt Greenberg. He always amazes me with his ability to tell me no with that same soft smile, so that I am even forced to accept answers I don't like. It helps me better swallow reality and possibly understand. What a smile!

So, back to the dogs and cats. If you see dog walkers when driving in or out of the Park, proceed at extra-slow speed and give them a wide berth and a wave. It is magic to see the warm reactions from both the humans and their dogs. A wave from you, driving past them cautiously on these streets without sidewalks, is a wonderful, positive gesture as well as great mental hygiene. We are all in this community together, thriving as best as we can at this phase of life. The simple act of waving can help bring this community even closer together.

The famous and very successful hospitality company Marriott uses the “10 x 10” rule to make their guests feel welcome. When a guest is within 10 feet, employees have 10 seconds to show concern and make them feel comfortable. Driving in or out of Marin Valley, many of us do the same with a wave. No need to consciously smile, because that comes automatically with the wave. It’s fun to see smiles bloom, even from strangers, when you wave; it is hospitality and community living at its finest. When I drive through the Park, I try to wave to everyone and count how many waves I receive in return. Sometimes it’s 2 for 3, sometimes 4 for 4,

and sometimes 0 for 3. I never know. But it’s fun, it feels good, and it makes me feel connected.

Finally, why is Taylor Swift so globally popular and successful? This octogenarian dug deep to discover how she connects so well with her followers and crowds. What is her magic secret to success, the charm and attraction that garners such avid loyalty? What is the sympathetic vibration she uses to connect with the audience that makes her so powerful and popular? It’s her smile, poetry, music, and positive energy. She identifies with the crowd, and they with her. She connects — and it all starts with a wave and a smile. Wow, you and I have the same power and connection possibility with every wave.

So, if you can’t wag your tail, at least wave when entering and leaving the Park. Even if you need a new knee or a heart valve, it’s good for your mental health and that of everyone around you. I think waving should be mandatory at all times (in addition to the 15-mph speed limit) when driving through our Park. We are all in this together; we only come in and out separately.

Bill Davis

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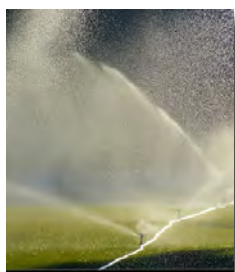
How Did the 2016 Hillside Fire Start?

That was last month’s question about the aggressive and hungry fire in the fall of 2016, which almost jumped into this community to feast on the smorgasbord of dried-out, pyrophytic vegetation and mobile homes. The answer: it was started by kids playing with matches up by the old water tank we drive past when entering and leaving the Park. The road to that

tank is located at the top of Marin Valley Drive, on the north side. It is gated to automobiles but is an easy and inviting walking path.

Today, much of the surrounding area, and the area around our homes, has been cleared or pruned. The burning of that very hill a couple of months ago was a preventative measure, part of a drill by our Novato Fire District.

But what about the possibility of another unintended ignition by kids or careless adults? Monthly — and sometimes weekly — Kevin Mulvany hikes the surrounding area to look for potential dangers. He is well connected with the police and fire rangers who investigate findings and complaints. Hand a little thanks and appreciation to Kevin the next time you see him. Vigilance is the price of safety.



Sprinkler Systems

by **MICHELE RODRIGUEZ**

Now that we are officially in winter, and the rainy season has begun, please consider turning off your yard sprinkler systems. Management can help if you need assistance.

Mar Val Events 2025

January 18	Winter Warm-up
February 22	Mardi Gras
March 15	St. Patrick's Day
April 19	Spring Fling
May 2	Cinco de Mayo
May 26	Memorial Day
June 14	Jazz Brunch
July 4	Independence Day
July 25	Pasta Pub
August 9	Summer Festival
September 1	Labor Day
September 26	Oktoberfest
October 25	Black Cat
November 22	Thanksgiving
December 13	Holiday Event
December 31	New Year's Eve

Message from Mar Val

Our Winter Warm-up event takes place on Saturday, January 18, when we try to warm you up with chili — both with and without meat — and cornbread ... some real down-home food for this start of the year.

Mar Val always wants new volunteers ... come to an event and see the many possible opportunities where you can volunteer. We will warmly welcome you.

Take care,

Carolyn K. Corry



Carolyn Corry
MAR VAL PRESIDENT
ckorry@comcast.net
415-370-6403



• 1 • Free • Drink • Coupon •
Have • a • drink • on • us !
Mar • Val • s • Pub • Friday
5pm • at • the • Clubhouse





WINTER WARM-UP

Saturday, January 18

Drinks at 5 pm Dinner at 6 pm

Meaty Chili or Veggie Chili
with Cornbread and Mixed Salad

\$16.30 per person. Make checks payable to Mar Val.

Deadline for reservations: Wednesday, January 15, 5 pm

(or when 120 reservations have been received).

For questions, call Susan Hoff @ 707-365-9426



Mar Val Presents



Laissez les bon temps rouler

Mardi Gras in the Park

Saturday, February 22

5 pm Cocktails/Music 6 pm Dinner

Featuring

*Dixieland Jazz music welcoming back
Virginia Tichenor & Marty Eggers*

Menu

*Red Beans/Rice with Sausage or
Vegetarian Red Beans/Rice
Corn Casserole and Salad
Dessert*

*Don your Mardi Gras beads and mask
and come enjoy the fabulous,
toe-tapping sounds of this musical duo.*

\$16.30 per person. Make checks payable to Mar Val.
*Reservation deadline: Wednesday, February 19, 5 pm
(or when 120 reservations have been received).*

For questions, call Susan Hoff @ 707-365-9426

Home Owners League Message

Greetings,

We hope everyone had a joyful and fulfilling holiday season.

Extra Food Program

As usual, we received an abundance of food donations during the holiday season, including fresh fruits and vegetables; bread, bagels, pies, cakes, and muffins; yogurt and other dairy items; various cuts of meat — and even whole turkeys!

Currently, around 17 dedicated individuals volunteer for the Breezeway Park Market. Their tasks include cleaning and disinfecting tables, setting out bags and tongs, washing the many cleaning cloths and other necessary items, and driving to collect food from our generous donors. In some cases, food is delivered by Extra Food, a volunteer-run nonprofit organization serving Marin and San Francisco. At times, volunteers unload up to three carloads of food in a single delivery, sort it, and distribute it to community members, who are usually eagerly waiting. Leftovers are refrigerated for later collection.

Additionally, volunteers pack food for those unable to pick it up themselves — whether due to illness, recent surgery, or other challenges. Food donations often arrive two or three times a day, and sometimes late into

the evening, meaning volunteers spend several hours most days prepping, waiting for, and distributing food. An email is sent to all registered participants after each delivery, informing them of the items available for pickup. (Let me know if you would like to be on the list.) Typically, there are no deliveries on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Donors include Costco, the Food Bank, Harvest Market, Lucky, Marinwood Market, Nugget, Safeway, the San Rafael Farmers Market, and Sprouts. We also occasionally receive one-time donations from other sources. Regular visitors often find high-quality items such as steaks, chops, bacon, fish, cheese, and prepared meals.

The value of the food we receive often amounts to thousands of dollars per delivery, offering significant savings to participating members of the community. Your generous gifts to our donation box help pay for supplies such as bags, cartons, disinfectant, and other essentials.

Those working at the Breezeway Market truly enjoy the process and find it deeply rewarding to see the smiles, gratitude, and enthusiasm from community members. If you'd like to get involved, please stop by and speak with Jill Boland any day except Saturday (she does need a day off!).

Marin Valley Household Waste Center

Our recycling center in the breezeway now accepts toner cartridges in addition to batteries and fluorescent bulbs. We're amazed at how many batteries we collected in just over a month, having already emptied the large battery container several times. It's great to know that these items are being properly disposed of, helping to keep our environment clean when they stay out of the Novato landfill. We encourage everyone to use this service — proper disposal of batteries and other hazardous items is essential to keeping our community and the planet safe.

Dump Run

The next dump run is scheduled for February or March 2025. Stay tuned for more details in upcoming editions of the *Echo*.

Wishing You All a Wonderful 2025

The entire HOL Board and our many volunteers wish the entire community a happy, successful, and jubilant year ahead. Here's to a rewarding 2025!

Warm regards,



John Feld
HOL PRESIDENT
johnmfeld@gmail.com
510-495-4138



Circle of Friends 2025

by **ANEESHA DILLON** and **TIMO NAVSKY**

Tuesday, January 14 • Fireside Room • 4 pm

In 2025, our Marin Valley group, the Circle of Friends, will enter its fourth year of learning together about the end of life. Since January 2022, we have focused primarily on educating ourselves about the deep, tender, and often taboo subject of death and dying. We have become more familiar with, and accepting of, death as a natural process that we all will face eventually.

An original aim of Circle of Friends was to make ourselves available to serve and support our friends and neighbors in the Park as they approach the last months, weeks, and days of life. The films, discussions, and guest speakers we have hosted have helped bring a new readiness and maturity of understanding to the participants. Over the coming months, we will gradually create a framework for how we would like to move forward with this community service project.

One way we might serve is by spending time with neighbors who are homebound – offering a listening ear or simply being present. For those who have a regular caregiver, we could provide respite visits, giving the caregiver a much-needed break.

At our last meeting, we brainstormed ways each of us might like to contribute — whether through healing touch, music, help with legacy projects or small tasks, contacting friends and loved ones, creating a sacred space, recording life histories, or simply sitting bedside as a silent, compassionate presence. We would also like to create a vigil group along the lines of *No One Dies Alone*, to ensure that our dying friends and neighbors are accompanied in supportive presence during their final days and hours.

The next Circle of Friends meeting will take place on January 14 in the Fireside Room. Our agenda will include creating a framework for how we might proceed, including ideas for community outreach. Input from those interested in the project is welcome. Kamala Allen will join Timo and Aneesha in coordinating the myriad practical matters involved. We will also propose occasional classes to support our deepening understanding of how to be with people at the bedside.

We hope to see you there. ■

Artists Meeting



by **SUZIE LAHR**

**Sunday, January 26
Fireside Room • 3 pm**

Please join us Sunday, January 26, at 3 pm in the Fireside Room for our 2025 Marin Valley Gallery artists meeting to discuss the clubhouse lobby Featured Artist program and set dates for hanging the new exhibit in the Fireside Room. David Gray and Suzie Lahr will be leading the discussion and would appreciate as many as possible to attend to share your feedback and ideas for our 2025 Gallery plans. I look forward to seeing you there. ■



Living and Dying

by **MARTY GELMAN**



**Monday,
January 27
• Fireside
Room
• 4:30 pm**

We are pleased to present Dale Borglum, a founder of the Living/Dying Project. Dale founded and directed the Hanuman Foundation Dying Center, the first residential facility in the United States to support people wishing to approach death consciously.

Along with Stephen Levine and Ram Dass, Dale has offered his love and compassion to support people in the last stages of their lives. The presentation will take place at 4:30 pm, with additional time for questions. We look forward to seeing you then. ■

From the HOLIDAY Craft Market

by **FRANCINA LeCLERQ**





Wedding Blessing

by **JANIE KLIMES**

Yes, it was a once-in-a-lifetime — well, several lifetimes — experience. I flew to England to witness the first-ever wedding blessing in the Oxford Diocese of the Church of England for a same-sex couple, who happened to be my son, Ryan King, and his husband, Alex Roth. They were invited by the new Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, Sarah Foot, to be the first couple to receive this special blessing. It was also the first-ever wedding blessing to be performed by a woman as the Dean of Christ Church Cathedral Oxford, in the 482 years since it was established.

When I met her, I immediately felt welcomed and enveloped by her excitement, joy, and the privilege she felt at being the first to perform such a special event. In fact, as she confided in us, other Anglican priests in the diocese were all waiting for this moment so they could perform the same ceremony in their own churches.

This is what she said to us, our families, the choir, the ecstatic gay organist, the 300 or so guests, and all the same-sex couples in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, and parts of Hampshire:

For nearly one thousand years, the Church has defined Holy Matrimony as a sacrament, a divine gift through which God's grace is known and lived.

Now, the Church of England (together with many other churches across the world) has recognized that the Church's blessing can, and should, also be extended to couples of the same sex who are living faithful lives together, witnessing to the unbounded love of God through their faithful devotion to one another.

It gives me enormous joy to be able to offer these prayers of love and faith in this Cathedral for the first time, and to do so for Alex and Ryan, who have already committed themselves one to another in their marriage, which I am honored to bless.

Search "Christ Church Evensong" to find out more and experience the organ music and singing that took place in this magnificent Cathedral during this very special event! ■

Mount Diablo Sunrise

by **FRANK SIMPSON**

The fall Mt. Diablo “henge sunrise” occurred at 7:37 am on October 29, 2024, as recorded from View Ridge Drive, Marin Valley Mobile Country Club, Novato, California, with an iPhone.

A thought puzzle/contest/conundrum for our *Echo* (and possibly Druid) readership:

When will the Mt. Diablo henge sunrise — centered exactly in the notch twixt the peaks of Mount Diablo — next occur?

Will it happen before, or after, the spring equinox of March 20, 2025, for example?

And if so, on what date?

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Observe and Protect

by **JOHN MELLQUIST**



With the onset of our rainy season, the shallow basins in the baylands behind MVMCC are filling up again, becoming essential habitat for a variety of waterfowl.

Waterfowl are an extremely diverse group of birds capable of thriving in a variety of aquatic and terrestrial habitats. These diverse environments provide a smorgasbord of food, including roots, tubers, submerged and emergent vegetation, seeds, and small animals. Over time, waterfowl have developed numerous adaptations to exploit these habitats and their abundant natural food resources. These adaptations allow different waterfowl species to intermingle in the same wetlands without competing for the same food resources.

It is bad practice — and illegal — for humans to feed these wild animals because teaching them to associate humans with handouts can lead to serious problems. One of the biggest concerns regarding supplemental feeding is that it can cause fatal digestive problems for some animals and alter normal behaviors.

Moreover, luring birds to the same place, such as feeders, on a predictable schedule makes them more vulnerable to predators, like cats and hawks, and

drawing them into close contact on shared surfaces facilitates the spread of bacteria, such as salmonella and *E. coli*. With wild bird numbers down by almost one-third since 1970, according to research in the journal *Science*, we don't want to add to these risks.

The California Fish and Game Code is the primary legal framework that regulates the management and conservation of wildlife in this state. Section 251.1 of the code specifically addresses the act of feeding wildlife, stating that it is illegal to feed big-game mammals, game birds, nongame birds, and nongame mammals in any area where hunting is prohibited. Feeding wildlife is considered harassment.

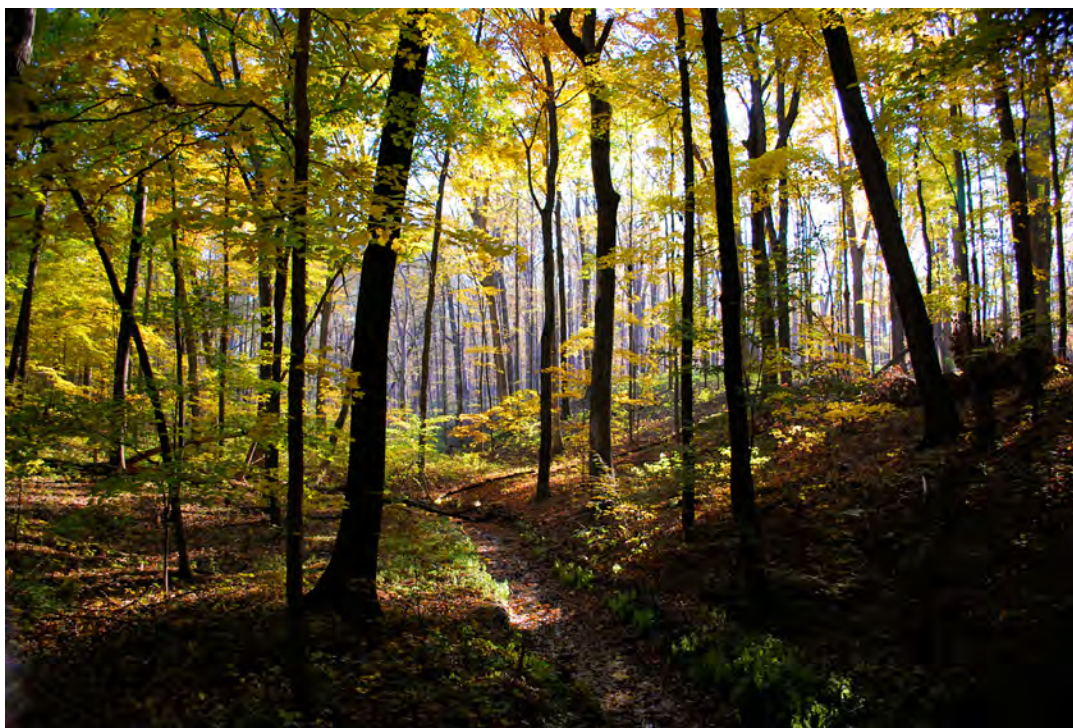
So, as helpful as we think we might be to wildlife, nature has provided the migratory waterfowl that live around us with the ability to thrive without our intervention. All they need from us is a clean and healthy environment. ■

Information sourced from:

*US Fish & Wildlife Service
California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife
Ducks Unlimited*

Cheer Ups

by **LORNA SASS**



Depression has been my devoted companion for much of my life. Like most boomers, I was offered antidepressants as a panacea, and while I had a good three-year run on Lexapro during my 30s, the other medications I tried either put me to sleep or made things worse.

So, I was forced to explore alternatives, and since I've always been an alternative sort of gal, I took up the challenge. Many approaches worked for a while, then suddenly stopped helping for mysterious reasons. Thus, whenever I noticed myself on a downward spiral, I was challenged to try something else. Happily, along the way, I discovered several reliable ways to tame the depression monster.

Here are a few practices that I have found most helpful. I've included a few links in case you feel drawn to learn more.

Noticing

Create a "depression thermometer." Tune in when you first wake up, and notice on a scale of 1 to 10 how

challenging it is to get out of bed. If you measure over 5, know that it would be wise to practice one of the interventions below. Alternatively, make a game out of noticing how many negative thoughts you have in an hour. When I do this, I find myself astonished at how mean I can be to myself! If I score over 5, I employ one or more of the following approaches.

Dissolving Anxious or Negative Thoughts

I recently discovered a process called havening, which I find very helpful. You repeatedly run your hands gently down the sides of your arms while slowly counting down out loud from 100 to 0 by threes — so you would say 100, 97, 94, etc. By the time you reach zero, you will likely feel considerably calmer and possibly not even remember why you felt so down!

More on havening:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1aRo69f_BM

Light, Air, and Forest Bathing

Stepping out onto my deck on a sunny morning and taking a deep breath of fresh air, I can't help but

notice that my spirits soar. I love looking at the play of light on the leaves and getting my hands and feet in the dirt to ground myself and connect to the earth. I play with my plants whenever I can and talk to the trees to see what wisdom they wish to impart.

Since I have SAD (seasonal affective disorder) and tend to feel blue during the rainy, drab winter months, I keep a light box plugged in and turn it on as soon as I wake up. I find that even if I don't sit in front of it for 30 minutes as advised, I feel cheered by seeing the light every time my eyes catch a glimpse of it.



I've also switched several of the lamps I use often to full-spectrum bulbs that simulate sunlight. These, as well as light boxes, can easily be purchased online.



When the weather permits, there's nothing like getting into the woods to lift your mood. The Japanese call it forest bathing, and it has been proven to increase serotonin and relieve stress. Needless to say, walking is also great exercise!



More on light boxes:

www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder/in-depth/seasonal-affective-disorder-treatment/art-20048298

More on full-spectrum bulbs:

<https://www.makegreatlight.com/about-us/blog/full-spectrum-bulbs-vs-natural-light-an-analysis-of-benefits>

More on forest bathing:

www.hellobc.com/stories/what-the-heck-is-forest-bathing-5-things-you-didnt-know-about-shinrin-yoku-in-bc/?psafe_param=1&gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiA9iC6BhA3EiwAsbltODs8UbtBcHvQfVIFBxltCT7pYDka-DGAD0RC_f6HxNG8PhcOLi8mEBoColcQAvD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds

Shake It Up, Baby!



Many years ago, when I still lived in Manhattan, I was on day three of Prozac and got the idea to begin ballroom dancing lessons. I went once and got so hooked that I signed up for unlimited lessons and started going to classes almost every night. After a week of not only movement but partner touch, I stopped the Prozac and the depression was gone.

If ballroom dancing doesn't call to you, try putting on the kind of music you love. For me, it's pre-50s jazz, especially stride piano. One of my heroes is pianist Teddy Wilson, whose magic hands danced on the keys in the Benny Goodman Small Groups. As soon as the music starts, I find myself smiling and tapping my feet, then dancing around the kitchen. Have you ever noticed that you can't be smiling, dancing, and depressed at the same time?

Benny Goodman Small Groups:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IDpYHE5tJY&list=OLAK5uy_nXKerno5p_rC5uZebX9sUwEvzEtc5QIVA

Teddy Wilson solo piano:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNrsOYF1qqw

Chanting, Humming, and Singing



Every morning when I first wake up, I play a kundalini chant that I recorded in my iPhone voice memos. The Sanskrit words are Sata Nama Rama Dasa, Sa Se, So Hung, roughly translated as *shedding the old you and becoming your true self.* The vibration of these sounds is thought to create calm and increase serotonin. Between each round of chanting these words, I breathe in with eight short puffs.

For a simpler approach, try humming your favorite tune or singing an upbeat song you love. Both singing and humming activate your vagus nerve and give you a sense of well-being.

Here's a shortened version of the chant, and many others can be found on YouTube. Explore until you find one that calls to you:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1R1EBnM6h7I>



Homage to Teddy Wilson (1912–1986)

Jazz pianist Teddy Wilson is my musical salve. I might be quite sad or depressed, but when I remember to listen to him, my body starts to move, as if each time he strikes a note on the keyboard I get an infusion of energy and light.

Although I love his solo playing best, I learn so much about how to relate to the syncopation of others by following how Teddy blends in and out of the rhythms of the other musicians so effortlessly, knowing intuitively when each player is breathing in and breathing out.

Despite being so brilliant and sparkling on the keyboard, Wilson never steals the show when he accompanies Billie Holiday. Indeed, he seems to let the keys speak through him and to thrive on supporting and enhancing her brilliance.

What a horror to recall that, since Teddy was Black, initially he wasn't allowed to enter through the main doors of hotels when he played with Benny Goodman! And yet he kept gifting the world with such healing musical balm despite being treated like scum. That is the power of improvisation — allowing the soul to continue speaking to a society that makes skin color more important than rhythm and sound.

Thank you, Teddy! You are the best antidepressant a girl could ask for, and I am so thankful that your healing powers are here for eternity. ■



Lesser goldfinch female pulling up seedpod

Lesser Goldfinch and Pine Siskin

Text and Photography by
DAVID GRAY

In early December, we were lucky to have a few days of clear blue skies and the brilliant red leaves of the American sweetgum trees (*Liquidambar styraciflu*). The seedpods of the gum trees are a perennial attraction for seed-eating birds, which flock to them whenever the seedpods mature, usually in winter.

Lesser goldfinches (*Spinus psaltria*) love the seedpods of the sweetgums and either hang from the seedpods or pull them up with their feet or beaks to feast on the seeds. They tend to travel in groups; about eight of them populated the tree I was photographing.



Lesser goldfinch male



Lesser goldfinch female with seeds on beak



Pine siskin

Generally a bit less colorful than the American goldfinch, the male lesser goldfinch has a more greenish color than bright yellow, and its cap and wings are a less well-defined deep black. The male and female are similarly differentiated, with the male being more colorful. The female lacks the black cap, and her wings are a dark olive color.

Pine siskins (*Spinus pinus*) are often found with lesser goldfinches, as they both feed on the same seasonal seeds. The pine siskin is slightly smaller than a sparrow and can easily be mistaken for one. The siskin's bill is much straighter and more pointed than that of a sparrow, and the siskin has a touch of gold coloring along the outside edges of its wings and notched tail.

Fortunately, incidents of salmonellosis in pine siskins that were reported in 2020 and 2021 have not recurred in recent years.



Pine siskin with touch of gold on tail



California scrub-jay

Bonus bird for a change in color: a California scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma californica*)

Wishing you all a Happy New Year! ■

