

# Scott

# Valley

# Voice

May 20, 2002

Newsletter of Scott Valley

Vol. II, Num. 2

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR by Francine Millman

We are so fortunate to have two wonderful contributions to *The Voice*; first an article from a new contributor and long-time Scott Valley resident, Bill Buchanan, on the coyote issues more and more of us have been experiencing of late and another in the continuing series of articles educating everyone in Scott Valley on the Alto Tunnel by John Palmer.

On behalf of the Board and those who comment to me personally, I want to personally thank John Palmer for his thorough, intensive and thoughtful research and resulting articles that have been providing an education to us all about the history and current issues regarding the tunnel.

In addition, thanks to Bill Buchanan for such an enjoyable and informative article on the coyotes. It appears that this will be an on-going educational process, as well and we hope to hear more information in the future.

As a community, we continually need volunteers for the Emergency Preparedness program. When a disaster occurs is NOT the time to be thinking about "preparation". Now is your opportunity to participate, be educated and serve your immediate community.

## IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN - BECOME A SVHA MEMBER

A new year has begun and it is time to renew your annual, tax deductible homeowners' membership. Your Board of Directors is working hard on the issues that represent Scott Valley homeowners, while keeping everyone informed of our progress via *The Voice*. Please send your \$40 to:

**Scott Valley Homeowners' Association  
P.O. Box 392, Mill Valley, CA 94942**

## CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE COYOTE KIND by William L. Buchanan

Claire was grumpy as we unloaded the truck one Saturday at our home in Mill Valley. "Just listen to those coyotes", she complained, hoisting a bag of groceries from Whole Foods. "Now they're howling in broad daylight. Next they'll be hanging around the kitchen for handouts. I don't like it. They give me the creeps. Why don't they just go somewhere else?"

Sure enough, one of the characters was raising hell in a ravine next to

Salt Creek, on the edge of Alto Bowl not far from the Scott Valley Swim and Tennis Club. But he wasn't howling; it was more like yapping, barking and high-pitched squealing. I had heard this guy some weeks before during an evening walk with our Brittany along the fire road next to Salt Creek and wondered what prompted the outburst. Since he's almost fourteen and his hearing is shot, Blazer wasn't any help at all.



It was about a year ago that I first heard them singing on the ridge called Horse Hill. Their serenade, waxing and waning on the night air, spoke of the sheer exuberance of hunting, the beauty of the platinum moonlight on the meadows, the freedom of the hills, the energy of the nomadic pack. To me, it was thrilling to hear a sound I associated with the high country. They made Claire nervous, with some justification as it turns out.

In February, Cassie, a white Bichon Frise, disappeared from her home at the base of Horse

Hill. Later in the day the owner looked up and saw a coyote standing over some object in the grass. His approach frightened the animal away and revealed the body of poor Cassie.

During a walk through the neighborhood with Blazer one evening, I encountered the owner of "Hanna", a Welsh Springer spaniel that is Blazer's ultimate heartthrob. While the dogs were shamelessly titillating each other, Hanna's owner told me that one summer evening Hanna wandered up the flank of Horse Hill. At the very moment her owner was calling her in, two coyotes raced downhill and rolled her head over heels in the oat grass. Her escape, facilitated by the owner's frantic yelling, was nothing short of miraculous.

This relatively recent appearance of a new predator close to home piqued my curiosity about whether it was common to have them living so close to developed areas and prompted me to learn more about Wily Coyote, the animal that Mark Twain called, "The most friendless of God's creatures." Research told me that Canis Latrans (literally "barking dog") occupies the ecological niche between wolves and foxes. Probably because other predators such as bears and cougars have been eliminated, the coyote now ranges from Alaska to Mexico and from Anaheim, California to Central Park in New York.

Around 10 square kilometers will sustain an average family, which at its largest consists of a male and female (often mated for their typical lives of six to eight years) and a litter of pups. Coyotes breed around January and seven to nine dark gray pups arrive about two months later. To accommodate the litter, the adults dig dens 5 to 30 feet deep or occupy hollow logs, culverts or dens abandoned by other animals. The adults coach the pups in hunting techniques until the fall, when the adolescent pups leave the area to establish their own territories. An omnivorous opportunist, a coyote will eat rodents, birds, frogs, toads, insects, snakes, garbage, fruit, berries, road kills and sometimes larger animals such as fawns.

Camilla Fox, National Campaign Director for the Animal Protection Institute, (API) told me that

widespread attempts to control coyote populations have had little long-term impact because coyotes' strong compensatory responses such as increased litter sizes and pup survival allow them to replenish their numbers and reoccupy vacated habitat. When lethal control produces a short-term reduction of a coyote population, coyotes emigrating from surrounding areas soon fill the vacuum. Fox also said that coyotes that have been habituated to human activity (most often as the result of people intentionally or unintentionally feeding them) can likewise be unhabituated to fear humans again through "aversive conditioning techniques". By that she means confronting coyotes that are encroaching on developed areas by yelling at them or throwing sticks and small clods of earth (to strike the body, not the head).

Glendale, California instituted a model coexistence program after problems with coyotes developed in 1981, precipitated by citizens who made a habit of sitting in lawn chairs and watching coyotes eat hand-delivered food. Glendale Police Captain Michael Post was quoted as saying, "The prevalent scientific view prescribes educated co-existence as the only realistic long term solution of coyote-human conflicts."

So what to do in Marin County? Ms. Fox and other experts suggest that some of the following approaches may lead to co-existence:

- Secure your garbage cans (and don't leave garbage out overnight; put it out the morning it is to be disposed).
- Keep ripe fruit off the ground.
- Install outdoor lights triggered by motion detectors.
- Never attempt to tame or feed a coyote.
- "Unhabituate" encroaching coyotes by making loud noises or throwing objects at the body, not the head.
- Keep cats and dogs indoors at night.
- Don't leave pet food or water bowls outside.

On a recent nightly walk with Blazer, I got to test the "aversive conditioning technique" I had been reading about when a medium-sized coyote trotted across the road and sat down in a mini meadow, watching us with a bit of an attitude. I shined the beam of a flashlight in his eyes and charged full tilt towards him, yelling and stomping my feet. Blazer hobbled along behind with his orthopedic boots going "put, put, put" on the asphalt. Sure enough, the startled animal turned tail and scooted across the meadow into the French broom. Cool.

For more information about Living with Coyotes, contact the Animal Protection Institute at [www.api4animals.org](http://www.api4animals.org) or 800-348-7387.

Bill asks that any information of sightings of coyote in Scott Valley be emailed to him directly at: [lostriver@worldnet.att.net](mailto:lostriver@worldnet.att.net). Please include as much information as possible, such as time of day, location, how many coyote were seen, etc.

Bill is working with the "coyote experts" in order to understand how they live within Scott Valley.

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**AN ALTO TUNNEL PRIMER  
by John Palmer**

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*This is the fourth in a series of articles written for the benefit of Scott Valley, Alto-Sutton Manor, and Chapman Meadows homeowners to provide background for evaluation of the proposal to reconstruct the Alto Tunnel.*

**Part IV: The Quincy Engineering Study of 2001, and the City of Mill Valley's Resolution Regarding Reconstructing the Tunnel.**

In April of 2001, the Congestion Management Agency (CMA) of the Marin County Department of Public Works commissioned a new feasibility study from the firms of Quincy Engineering, Jacobs Associates, and Parikh Consultants in order to evaluate the Alto Tunnel for its possible conversion to pedestrian and bicycle use.

On June 5, 2001 a team from these firms and from CMA attempted to enter the tunnel at its northern portal (as the southern end was plugged twenty years earlier), and confirmed that access to the interior of the tunnel was blocked by a plug of concrete and shotcrete, as previous reports had claimed. Since the balance of the tunnel could not be inspected without boring through the concrete, the team chose to complete its task by summarizing the findings of all the previous studies, projecting the tunnel's current conditions based on those findings, and recommending a more thorough investigation. The project was thus broken down into three phases, as follows:

- VOLUME I:** Background Information  
**VOLUME II:** Engineering Summary and Proposed Supplemental Investigation  
**VOLUME III:** Feasibility Assessment

The team completed Volume I, a compendium of all the previous studies and related correspondence, and Volume II, the findings of the limited investigation of June 5, and released them in August of 2001. Volume II went on to state that the County would have to spend another \$398,000 to complete the Feasibility Assessment envisioned for Volume III, which is

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**SCOTT VALLEY HOMEOWNERS'  
ANNUAL MEETING  
by Francine Millman**

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This is just a brief note to thank everyone who attended the Annual Meeting held at the SV Swim & Tennis Club on April 9, 2002.

The new Board of Directors' was confirmed, adding Ellen Weber and Sally Palmer (no relation to John Palmer), to the board, for a total of 9 board members.

In addition, a special 'thank you' to the Mayor of Mill Valley, Anne Solem who was our special guest at the meeting. She addressed issues and answered questions that impact Mill Valley and Scott Valley residents alike. Thanks again!

intended to provide options and anticipated costs for re-constructing the tunnel; its authors also pointed out that even after the Assessment is completed, the results may not be fully conclusive.

In order to complete the Feasibility Assessment, the authors of Volume II discussed several options which could be used to gain sufficient access to the tunnel's interior to enable the team to complete its work, then settled on its recommendation: boring through the plug at the northern (Corte Madera) end using road header (excavation) equipment

Since the concrete plug is reported to be 124 feet long, and another 170 foot long section of fill is believed to extend south of the concrete, the excavation would need to extend almost 300' feet into the tunnel in order to provide access to the interior. The authors further proposed the installation of monitoring equipment to check on surface settlement, ground movement, and subsurface movement in order to protect the homes atop and along the northern portal during this process.

As noted, the bid for this further study is \$398,000; the Board of Supervisors voted to seek funding sources from the State and Federal Governments rather than spend money from the County's general account for this purpose. To date, no source for this funding has been located, so the process has been stalled until the money can be found.

It is interesting to note that none of the studies to date, including the most recent ones, have analyzed the potential costs and impacts of acquiring the rights of way and other property necessary to complete the proposed bikeway. The County owns only the middle section of the tunnel (963 linear feet), while the Union Pacific Railroad owns 720 feet of it at the southern end and 490 feet at the northern end. Also, several homes now sit directly above sensitive portions of the tunnel's openings, many more homes line the entrances at either end, and roadways and utility lines crisscross the routes leading to the portals. At least two homes, one above each portal, would either have to be condemned and acquired at their fair market value, or vacated,

re-engineered, and reconstructed, prior to the commencement of any work to the rebuild the tunnel.

Acknowledging the significant impact that reconstructing the tunnel would have on the City, Mill Valley's civic leaders have paid close attention to the progress of this proposal. On December 4, 2000, the City Council passed Resolution 00-36, and made a point of ensuring that the document was presented to the Marin County Board of Supervisors and the CMA. The Resolution lists eleven issues that the Council wants included in the Feasibility Assessment, among which are:

- 1) The manner in which construction of the tunnel would be financed, including a cost/benefit analysis;
- 2) The extent to which reconstruction would impact the safety of homes and residents nearby;
- 3) Analysis of tunnel safety, and the costs of policing, lighting, and maintaining it if it were to be reconstructed;
- 4) The extent to which reconstruction of the tunnel would reduce funding for other worthy bicycle and pedestrian projects;
- 5) Evaluation of the alternatives to using the tunnel, and a cost/benefit analysis of those alternatives.

Although it is not expressly stated in the Resolution, it appears that the Council's acceptance of the findings and recommendations of the current study would depend upon a satisfactory resolution of the issues it has raised.

*Stay tuned for the final in the series of Alto Tunnel Articles in the next edition of The Voice.*

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**COMMUNITY EMERGENCY  
PREPAREDNESS UPDATE  
BY BARBARA JENNINGS**

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**F**ive Southern Marin fire jurisdictions work together to offer Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Training for our area. The 10-hour course teaches utility control, light search and rescue, fire suppression, disaster medicine/triage, and team response. Cost for the series is \$25. Pre-registration and payment are required. **Call 389-4138**, the Southern Marin CERT number, for information.

At this time there are two regular CERT courses still open. One begins June 4, continuing June 11, 18, 25, and July 2. The other begins Oct. 1 and continues on Oct. 8, 15, 22, and 29. Each session is at a different Southern Marin fire station, from 7 to 9 p.m. In addition, a new CERT course is now scheduled for two Saturdays from 9 am to 2 pm on May 11 and 18 at the Southern Marin firehouse on Reed Blvd. in Strawberry.

CERT training is recognized nationwide as the new approach to civil defense and survival during disasters, whether natural or manmade. While earthquakes are still the most likely type of disaster here in Marin, we must recognize the possibility of terrorist acts, especially bio or chemical. In most types of disaster, your earthquake planning and preparedness will stand you in good stead.

Get informed, take the training, and feel ready for whatever comes along! Call Nan Paget at 389-4138 for information on disaster preparedness.

Last week was the first meeting of Scott Valley residents interested in creating our emergency plan. We've made progress and have raised some important issues for our neighborhood. If you are interested in helping Scott Valley establish an emergency plan, or would like to volunteer to provide emergency services, please call Barbara Jennings at 381-2624. **We need your Help!!**

**Scott Valley Voice**

This is a collaborative effort of the  
Scott Valley Board of Directors

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Francine Millman

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Page 6

Vol. II, Num. 2

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## KID AND YOUNG ADULT CORNER

We are looking for contributions from Scott Valley young adults and kids who wish to have something included in *The Voice*.

Do you want to offer baby-sitting services in Scott Valley? Do you want to wash cars? Walk dogs? Water plants?

If so, email [TheVoice@promptconsulting.com](mailto:TheVoice@promptconsulting.com)

## FOR SALE

If you are having an upcoming garage sale or are selling any items and would like them posted in *The Voice*, simply email: [TheVoice@promptconsulting.com](mailto:TheVoice@promptconsulting.com). List the item, the amount, a contact phone number and/or address and of course, your name.