



*Serving our community for 35 years*  
 Alta Dutch Flat Gold Run  
**COMMUNITY**

Volume 35 – No. 2 PUBLISHED BY THE DUTCH FLAT COMMUNITY CENTER WITH MEMBER SUPPORT

Summer 2024

## Mike and Kathy Mutto to serve as Grand Marshals of the 4th of July parade

By Laura Glassco

Each year, Dutch Flat's 4th of July Parade selects a community member(s) who represents what we would like to strive for: hardworking, loving, people-oriented, industrious, diligent, and energetic, to name just a few of the qualities that we would like to define us.

This year, we are very pleased to announce Mike and Kathy Mutto as our Grand Marshal's for 2024. Mike and Kathy have been happily married for 29 wonderful years. They enjoy gardening, traveling, fishing and being parents to three lovely daughters and grandparents to their toddler grandson. Mike has worked at many careers, most notably as a Project Manager. One of Mike's local projects was the lead contractor in the restoration of the Dutch Flat Hotel, bringing it back to its glory days. Kathy has worked the past 13 years as a self-storage manager. Kathy also worked locally for many years at the Monte Vista Inn.

In addition to their busy "day jobs", both Mike and Kathy are very committed to making our community

strong and viable. For the past 10 years, Mike has served as President of the Dutch Flat Pool Board. Through his leadership the pool, our beloved gem in the foothills, has seen tremendous improvements with updated, renovated and restored physical and mechanical projects. One of Mike's proudest accomplishments, besides his lovely marriage and family, is to have brought back the beloved Dutch Flat Pool BBQ Fundraiser. This is certainly a highlight event of the summer!

Kathy has served as a Board Member of the Alta Dutch Flat School Board for 13 years. She continues to provide her expertise to help the school continue its excellent educational vision.

A perfect quote from both Mike and Kathy is: "Live Life One Day At A Time And Enjoy The Ride". That is certainly something we all want to achieve!

When we asked the Mutto's if they would be our Grand Marshal's there was no hesitation. They replied, "We'd be honored." So it is with a great honor that we present Mike and Kathy Mutto as our Independence Day Parade Grand Marshal's.



Mike and Kathy Mutto

Photo by Laura Glassco



Dutch Flat Pool

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## Dutch Flat Heritage Trail Day is July 13

By Sarah Fugate



On July 13, from 10 am – 4 pm, the Golden Drift Historical Society and Museum will host its annual Heritage Trail Day. View exhibits on nearby towns, hydraulic mining, the transcontinental railroad, Towle Lumber Company, Maidu Indians, and Chinese Pioneers. A large collection of historic photographs helps you to experience Dutch Flat in its heyday.

A walking tour of Dutch Flat, led by local resident and docent, Jim Ricker, will begin at 10:00am (1 hour), followed by a Cemetery Tour, led by local resident and docent, Debby McClatchy, at 11:30am (1.5 hrs.). For both tours, wear comfortable shoes, a hat and bring water. The historic Dutch Flat United Methodist Episcopal Church, Dutch Flat School (now the Community Center), Hearse House, Oddfellows Hall, Buster's Saloon (now the Alta Realty Office) with the Wells Fargo vault, and the Dutch Flat Hotel will be open with docents from 1:00-3:00pm. Complimentary refreshments, provided by volunteers, will be available on the Museum grounds.

Normal hours of operation for the Golden Drift Museum are: Memorial Day through the end of September, Friday – Sunday, 12:00-4:00 pm, plus summer holidays.



Photo by Tom Fugate

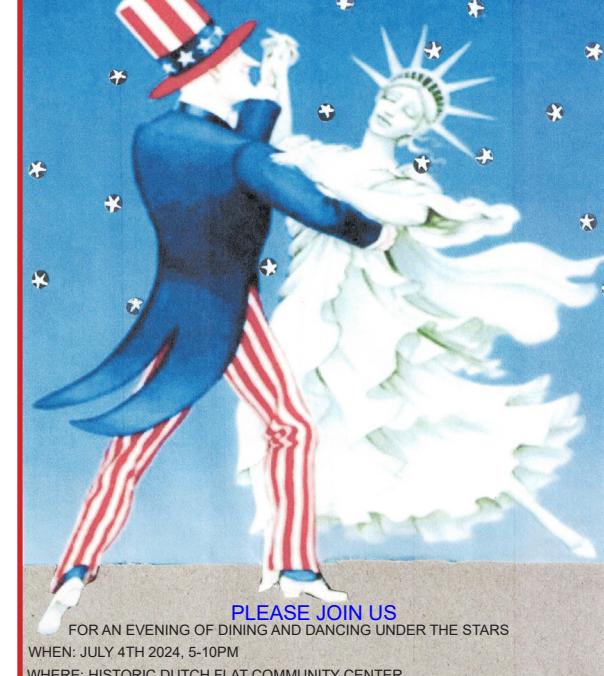
### Funerary Burner under construction

We have made progress in our restoration of the Chinese Cemetery. Placer County Parks and Grounds crew have done a significant amount of clean up and improvements, including removing brush and trees, regrading and surfacing the entrance road, and grading an area to facilitate traditional ceremonies. Construction of a funerary burner, funded by generous donations from Chinese-Americans, is well underway, with expected completion by the end of July.

Hardscape design for the Chinese Cemetery was provided by Kate Bowers Design (916-718-1577). A native plant plan was produced by local landscape designer, Lora Piscatelli, of Dreamscapes (530-368-6836). Both plans will require more time and money to complete, with their completion expected by July 2025.

Funerary burners serve as a fire-safe place for the ritualized burning of spiritual tributes. Paper and cardboard facsimiles of money, clothing, and other possessions are burned to supply the deceased in the afterlife.

Some 100 Chinese-Americans plan to participate in Dutch Flat's 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade. Following the parade, they will have a traditional ceremony at the Chinese Cemetery to honor their ancestors.



PLEASE JOIN US  
 FOR AN EVENING OF DINING AND DANCING UNDER THE STARS  
 WHEN: JULY 4TH 2024, 5-10PM  
 WHERE: HISTORIC DUTCH FLAT COMMUNITY CENTER  
 PRICE: \$30 PER PERSON, PLUS (1) AMERICAN APPLE PIE PER FAMILY  
 ALCOHOL NOT PROVIDED: BYOB

Dinner and Dance at the Dutch Flat Community Center, Thursday, July 4, 5-10 pm. \$30/person plus 1 pie/family, tickets available at the Dutch Flat Trading Post

**COMMUNITY STAFF****Publisher:**

Dutch Flat Community Center  
P. O. Box 14, Dutch Flat CA 95714  
530-389-8310

**Editorial Staff:**

Sarah Fugate, Editor

**Reporters & Contributors:**

Shana Brown  
Ernie Bullard  
Sarah Fugate  
Bill Gallaher  
Laura Glassco  
Debby McClatchy  
Mia Monroe  
Mike Mutto  
Annette Rodgers Purther  
Madam Truefire  
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**Email:** dfcc.newspaper@gmail.com

**Address:** 933 Stockton Street, Dutch Flat

**Website:** www.dutchflatcc.org

**Facebook:** Dutch Flat Community Center

**X:** @dutchflatcc

Views expressed in letters, guest opinion pieces and other contributions do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor, the Dutch Flat Community Center, or its Board.

This newspaper is published quarterly and distributed to Dutch Flat Community Center members and to residents of the Center's service area from Gold Run to Emigrant Gap in Placer County, California.

We welcome contributions from readers. Submission deadline for the next issue:

**September 10, 2024.**

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**The Attic:** Thursdays, 10 am - 1 pm.

**Dutch Flat Community Center Board of Directors Meeting:** 2nd Mondays, 6:00 pm. Location varies. Contact Laura Glassco, 916-778-8308.

**Dutch Flat Community Center Potluck:** 3rd Thursdays. 6:00 pm. Bring a place setting, your own drink, and a dish to share. July and August at the Dutch Flat Pool.

**Dutch Flat Seventh Day Adventist:** Community Worship Service, Wednesday, 6:30 pm and Saturday, 3:30 pm. 936 Stockton Street. Contact 706-633-8789.

**Dutch Flat United Methodist Church Pancake Breakfast:** 2nd Saturdays, 8:00 am -10:00 am.

**Dutch Flat United Methodist Church Arts & Crafts:** Thursdays, 9:30 am - 4:30 pm. All are welcome. Learn something new!

**Dutch Flat United Methodist Church:** Worship Service, Sundays, 11:00 am. Fellowship lunch following service. Contact: 916-847-8477.

**Golden Drift Historical Society Board Meeting:** 1st Monday of February, April, June, August, October and December, 7 pm. Golden Drift Museum, Main Street. Contact Sarah Fugate, 530-210-5085.

**Pioneer Union Church, Gold Run:** Worship Service, Sundays, 10 am.

**Placer County Library Mobile Service:** See Page 5.

**Sierra First Baptist Church, Alta:** Worship Service, Sundays, 11 am. 33990 Alta Bonny Nook Rd, Alta. Contact 530-389-2168.

**Sierra First Baptist Church Bible Study:** Mondays, 8:30 am.

**Sierra First Baptist Church Community Lunch:** Mondays, 11:30 am - 12:30 pm. Free.

**Sierra First Baptist Church Food Pantry:** Thursdays, 10 am - 12 pm.

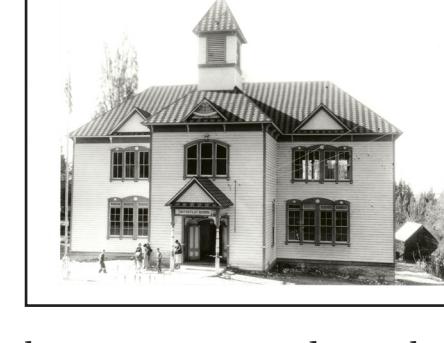
**A message from the DFCC President**

By Laura Glassco

First and foremost, we'd like to thank each of you for renewing your membership in the Dutch Flat Community Center! Many of you gave above and beyond the membership fee to ensure that we can continue to maintain this historic landmark!

The Spring Fling was a very successful event! Our Chef, Jamie Janes, once again worked her magic to produce the most delicious tri-tip, roasted potatoes and green beans. All Board members and many helpful other members provided the needed expertise to decorate, serve, sell before/during the event. Many thanks to each of you!

The Alta Dutch Flat 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduating Class held their annual graduation party at the Center. In keeping with the tropical vibe, they too enjoyed a fun-filled memorable evening with shells, palms trees and delicious food!



Thanks to an anonymous donor, the Golden Drift Historical Society, and the Dutch Flat Community Center, eight vintage 8<sup>th</sup> grade annual class banners were museum-grade mounted and are now hanging in the Center's foyer. These historic banners range from 1900 to 1962!

We have lots of fun things planned for the summer. Come and join us at one or all of these events!

Thank you for all you do to make our community a wonderful place to live!

*Laura Glassco*

**Here's what's coming up this Summer:**

Month of June		Preparation and exterior painting of the Community Center
July 4	10:30 am 5-10 pm	Parade through Dutch Flat "Dinner and Dancing Under the Stars"
July 18	6 pm	Potluck at the Dutch Flat Pool
July 25	9:30-11 am	Cindy Gustafson, Placer County Supervisor. CHP and Placer County Public Works will join Cindy to discuss our concerns.
Month of July	9 am-12 pm	Each Saturday, accepting donations for the White Elephant Sale
Month of August	9 am-12 pm	Each Wednesday and Saturday, accepting donations for the White Elephant Sale
August 15	6 pm	Potluck at the Dutch Flat Pool
August 31	9 am-2 pm	White Elephant Sale
September 1	10 am-2 pm	White Elephant Sale
September 7	9 am-2 pm	White Elephant Sale
September 8	10 am-2 pm	White Elephant Sale

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# Welcome Home

By Bill Gallaher

The following is a true story. My last column was about Baron 52, a United States Air Force EC-47 spy plane that was shot down over Northern Laos after the Vietnam war ended. This column is about what might have happened to the crew that survived the crash and probably became Prisoners of War. This story is personal to me because I was, and flew with, squadron mates of these men. Also, a squadron mate of mine, in F-101s had been a POW in the Hanoi Hilton. The narratives and communications between the crew are my conjecture, based on my experience as an EC-47 navigator. Because none of the missing crew has been recovered my story of what Sgt. Cressman may have experienced is also conjecture. Of the 8-member crew of Baron 52, 3 pilots and the navigator were killed. The other 4, all radio operators, and their top-secret electronic equipment, have never been found. There is much evidence they became POWs. This is only part of their story.

5 February 1973, 0200 hours, over northern Laos, elevation classified:

*Navigator to Crew: "Stay alert guys. We're over Laos and approaching the area that heavy triple A has been reported. But nothing for a couple of weeks. WTF are we doing here? The war has been over for a week!!!"*

*Pilot to crew: "Aww Shit guys, tracers. Here it comes. Looks like 37MM. Buckle up. Grab your chutes. gonna get rough."*

*Baron 52 to Ground: "BARON 52 is taking heavy ground fire."*

*Co-Pilot to Crew: "Uh guys. We just took a bad hit. We're going down. We'll try and hold her level so y'all can jump, but make it quick. Radio is out. You all know what to do. Jettison the electronics if you can. Good luck my friends. God Bless us all." "We all know there will probably be no rescue attempt. We're on our own."*

*As Sergeant Peter Cressman was hanging under his parachute, those were the last few minutes of his life as he remembered it. After he and the other 3 radio operators jettisoned the top-secret electronic gear, they were able to jump, but were scattered over a wide area of dense Northern Laotian jungle punctured by huge limestone karsts. Sgt Cressman was the last of the 4 out and listened to Baron 52 go down. No explosion, and because of the darkness, he saw no other chutes. That hurt, but he had to focus on saving himself now.*

*The Sgt knew his capture would be a priority to the enemy. He and the other radio operators were stationed with the 6994th Security Squadron. All had special Top Secret security clearances because*

*their job of identifying and collecting enemy information was critical to pinpointing troop movements along the Ho Chi Minh trail.*

*As soon as he hit the ground, the sergeant hid his chute and turned on his survival*

*radio. While listening for his crew, "No rescue attempt" kept pulsing through his thoughts. "I'm on my own now. Focus, Focus". He thought of the letter to his congressman, unmailed in his footlocker, telling the congressman that the sergeant's unit is in violation of the Paris Peace Accords, being forced to continue missions despite the official end of American involvement in the war. "We all wanted to refuse orders, but feared the consequences".*

*Sgt Cressman thought, "How fu@#\$%ing ironic is that? Not only is this an unjust war, IT'S FU#\$%^ING OVER!!! Within a week of my letter, me, and 7 other crewmen are either dead or about to become POWs. I'm scared. We all know that we're screwed. The USA probably won't even acknowledge that we were in the air. We were flying a combat support mission a week after the war has "officially" ended, over a country that we are "officially" not flying over. And the last part of every preflight briefing is a reminder that intelligence types, like me and my 3 fellow radio operators, are highly sought after by both Russia and China.*

*I'm hoping that it being dark, and no explosions, I have an advantage over the bad guys."*

*The radio hisses quietly as someone presses the talk button without talking. Cressman gives a quick two clicks back and waits. Within about 30 minutes all 4 of the radio operators have quietly checked in and decided to just stay put and hide and wait till morning. Since none of the pilots or the navigator have checked in, the sergeant assumes, correctly it turns out, that they were all killed. (Wreckage found two days later showed the plane inverted, the wings sheared off, and all 3 pilots and the navigator were dead.) Morning brings good and bad news. Karsts are great landmarks, but how to get 4 guys that don't know the topography, to meet at one of the karsts using very little radio because of limited battery life and knowing the bad guys have radio direction finders. The 4 crew agree to check in with each other twice a day. On the afternoon check in on the second day of evading the enemy, one of the guys had a strangely Asian accent to go with his perfect "engrish". All crews had been warned that if the enemy captures a radio, they have English speakers, so one of the guys had probably been captured. Within 3 days all 4 were POWs. Being fluent in Vietnamese, Sgt Cressman was able to get the gist that they were being moved to North Vietnam and possibly China. "Name Rank Serial Number Name Rank Serial Number".*

*"Officially" the 4 missing men and the radio gear have never been found. The final "official" government report concluded that all members of Baron 52 were killed in the crash. But much evidence points to the possibility that all 4 Baron 52 radio*

operators became POWS. Because of the circumstances surrounding the shoot down of Baron 52, and the subsequent cover-up, we will probably never know the fate of those 4 and hundreds of other men.

So, how many POWs returned from Vietnam? How many are left? That depends on who you ask.

On May 22, 2023 the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, reported that of the 81,000 Americans still missing from all wars since WWII, 1,582 Americans are still unaccounted for from the Vietnam War. Not surprising, veterans, surviving family members and others specifically studying the Vietnam POW issue, claim the actual number is higher.

Examples come from official documents that report intercepted radio communications, reported sightings, letters, and in 1979 the Defense Intelligence Agency reported a former North Vietnamese intelligence officer stating that about 700 Americans still remained in Vietnam as a "strategic asset."

What does a "strategic asset" mean? The United States agreed to pay Vietnam over 3 billion dollars for "reconstruction aid" in exchange for all the POWs. The U.S. wanted the prisoners returned before the payment. However, a 1976 CIA memo reported a Vietnamese communist official stated in 1973, that "Americans were being held in Hanoi ....and that the Vietnamese are "not stupid and would hold these Americans until the \$3 billion in promised reconstruction aid was paid".

Hamilton Gayden, a retired circuit court judge in Nashville, testifying before the U.S. Senate in the 1990s, said that research uncovered letters written by people believed to be POWs using code names after 1980. Their writings indicated that nearly 200 prisoners traveled eight or nine days by boat to an undisclosed location in South Vietnam. They were then dispersed in small groups to seven regions in Laos and South Vietnam under the authority of a handler.

According to Gayden, the letters indicate that not only were all POWs not returned in 1973, but that the POWs referenced in the letters were held, at least for a time, in a country outside Vietnam then returned to Southeast Asia.

(Following the war, some U.S. soldiers chose to remain in Vietnam, assimilating themselves into new families, Gayden said.)

There is more evidence leading to a cover-up, because years after the war hundreds of fleeing Indochina refugees reported seeing Americans under Vietnamese or Laotian control. Many of these refugees passed polygraph tests.

So, whatdayathink? Why would our government not admit that we still have POWs that have not returned home? Looks bad politically. The Vietnam War was controlled by the politicians. I guess it is still being run by the same. Same lies, different faces.

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## Graduation at Alta-Dutch Flat School

By Shana Brown



**ADFS 8th Grade**  
**Graduates:** Fintan, Bella, Charlotte, Madisyn, Tatum, Addie, Heather, Madalynn, and Chloe

Congratulations to our graduating class from Alta-Dutch Flat School: Fintan, Bella, Charlotte, Madisyn, Tatum, Addie, Heather, Madalynn, and Chloe

As I've written before in past newsletters, Alta-Dutch Flat School is a very special place to go to school and to work. One of our biggest celebrations, with the most traditions, is our Eighth Grade Graduation. Most of our students go to Colfax High School when they leave us and the high school has done an increasingly good job at helping our students make that transition by sending counselors up in January to start the enrollment process and sending students, part of Link Crew, to meet with our eighth graders for a students' perspective in May. Still, despite these efforts, it still sometimes feels like our students fall off the earth when they leave Alta. So we do our best to make sure they feel celebrated when they leave us.

A big milestone is the eighth-grade trip. Parents start raising money for the eighth-grade trip in kindergarten so that all students are included. Part of the trip always includes a visit to San Francisco, some years for an overnight and some years just for the day. During dinner on the trip, the class's student with the highest grade point average from fourth through eighth grade is recognized as valedictorian and the student with the second highest GPA is recognized as salutatorian. This year's class valedictorian was Bella and the salutatorian was Madisyn. Both students are tasked with writing and delivering a speech at graduation.

The morning of graduation, the graduating class gathers for a special breakfast together. This tradition was started with our beloved secretary, Tracy Soule and business

manager, Lori Warwick, but has continued with our lunch lady, Jera Starnes, preparing it. The menu is always the same: French toast made with fat slices of Texas toast, bacon, and eggs. The graduates practice for the ceremony. Each student is responsible for writing and delivering a speech at graduation. Eighth graders are dismissed for the day when they are done. During this time, the seventh graders are responsible for moving chairs up to the field for graduation. The seventh graders are also responsible for hosting the graduation dance that evening, held at the Dutch Flat Community Center.

They choose a theme for the dance, this year a beach theme, but it remains secret to the eighth graders.

The graduation ceremony is a community event, with local community organizations coming to present special awards for our graduates as well as donating money as part of the recognition. We very much appreciate living in a community which so deeply cares for and supports our school. A quick picture is always taken for posterity, which will be proudly hung on the wall, and the ceremony begins. We take great pride in making the ceremony feel special and we take this opportunity to say all the things we've noticed and recognized about our students during their time in Alta before they leave us for bigger and better things.

Finally, the next morning, we hold an assembly for the Last Day of School, what we call the Chair Ceremony. Eighth graders at Alta always get to sit in chairs during assemblies while the rest of the students have to sit on the floor. Those chairs are sacred. Our first and second grade teacher, Christina Fejes, reads *Oh The Places You'll*

Go and the eighth graders head out to Play Day. The seventh graders then, with great anticipation and fanfare, move to the highest rung of our school and get their chairs. Usually, there's not a dry eye in the place.

All of this is to say that we try to recognize that leaving Alta is a major milestone that we want to honor. We try to leave them knowing that, no matter what, they will always have a special place at our school and that they will always be Alta Bears.

Congratulations to our award winners and thank you to our presenters (many of whom stayed and helped move chairs and the stage! That's what happens when you invite volunteers!)

### **2024 AWARDS**

**Veterans of Foreign Wars recipient -- Chloe**

**Dutch Flat Community Center Award,** presented by Laura Glassco -- **Madisyn**

**Oddfellows Most Improved Award,** presented by Dave Brown -- **Tatum**

**Rebekah's Golden Rule Award,** presented by Heidi Suter -- **Madalynn**

**Friends of Dutch Flat Swimming Pool Scholar-Athlete,** presented by Paul Thompson -- **Heather**

**Alta-Dutch Flat Parents' Club Award,** presented by Maribel McDonnell -- **Addie**

**Alta-Dutch Flat Board Award for Leadership,** presented by Kirstin Bivins -- **Fintan**

**Alta-Dutch Flat School Staff Award,** presented by Kacee Stetler -- **Charlotte**

**Award for Academic Excellence,** presented by Christina Fejes -- **Bella**

**Presidential Award for Academic Achievement,** presented by Scott Leaman -- **Bella and Madisyn**



**Dawn M. Anderson, D.D.S.**

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## Can Time Stand Still Here?

By Mia Monroe

The long days and relaxed pace of summer, the endless time by the pool or in a hammock are classic vacation experiences. Time seems to stop when reading a good book or listening to music, watching our prolonged sunsets.

Studies now document what we all often feel in Dutch Flat: some kinds of time do feel different! And there are ways to make it feel like we have more time, too! Science recognizes examples such as learning something new, stimulating and memorable or indulging in something that feels like a treat (seeking out a super bloom, learning a new bird species, gardening, taking up a sport, trying a new recipe, making that chutney recipe, starting an illustrated journal....). This is also why vacation can seem to last longer than the equivalent time back home doing the routine.

Back to one of my favorite ways to slow time AND be in a different world: read a good book in the hammock! And the one that recently transported me was *The Lincoln Highway* which I picked up because of the title and my fascination with this route plus the author (Amor Towles) is a favorite. It



Photo by Mathieu B. Morin

is an adventure, the classic hero's journey, great character studies, some good writer tricks, features trains, too! Long book for hours of reading pleasure! Plus a few good life tips (get to know someone for at least three days before you call them a friend, the good rule of counting to 10....).

Also, time slows when one reflects on past times, people one has had the good fortune to meet. One for me is the late Congressman "Pete" McCloskey who I went to New Hampshire (when in high school) to campaign for as a peace statement. I watched his positions, stands and influence my whole life so was pleasantly surprised to learn he, too, had a deep Dutch Flat connection. I sought the family plot in the cemetery and had some quiet time there over Memorial Day Weekend to reflect on this "towering figure, a man of great courage and high ideals who made his mark on history" as one of his relatives said to sum up his life.

## Welcome to Another Summer Season at the Dutch Flat Pool

By Mike Mutto



We are so happy to have 4 returning lifeguards calling for a big shout out to Paige, Daniel, Kaylee, and Kris. If you have the opportunity, don't be shy, walk up and thank them for being there for us!

We also have a couple new guards on board that will be a great asset for next year also. We are planning to bring back one-on-one lessons this year, working on the details now. Information will be posted on the "All Things 389" Facebook site.

Mark your calendars for August 3<sup>rd</sup> to join us at the benefit Bar B Que. As always, it will be a wonderful get together with all of your neighbors.

We will stay with the mixed grill menu with killer side dishes and the no host, top-shelf bar. Live music by the Steve Menconi Band will be back for your entertainment and dancing on the deck.

Tickets are \$30.00, available at the DF Trading Post or from any of the DF Pool Board members.

There will be no tickets sold at the door, so get them while you can.

A couple notes and requests on the side

here: We really need parents to pay attention to their Kiddo's while in the pool because our lifeguards are not babysitters.

We would also like to really discourage any social media posts about the pool because, as you know and have experienced, the influx of out-of-district visitors really contributes to a crowded house, on the weekends especially.

Also consider donating, if you can, to either of the boxes at the upper and lower entrances. Our next goal for the facility upgrades is sandblasting 20 years of paint off the bottom with the application of a new gunite coating needed for the life and longevity of pool. A plumbing, drain upgrade is also going to be required while we do this work to stay in compliance with State and County mandates. Any help will be greatly appreciated!

Shirts and hats will be available all summer at the pool to help build the fund!

So enjoy your summer, Enjoy the pool and be safe, keeping an eye on your kids while you are there.

Thank you all, and see you at the Bar B Que.

Placer County Library Visiting  
Dutch Flat Community Center

Thursday  
11:30 am - 12:30 pm  
June 6 & 20  
July 18  
August 1 & 15

Book Club at Dutch Flat Community Center

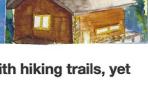
June 20 - Almost Somewhere by Suzanne Roberts  
July 18 - The Rosie Project by Graeme Simsion  
August 15 - Shoe Dog by Phil Knight

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Peggy Roberts, DVM



## Don't Mess with a Wild Woman

By Madam Truefire

Some thirty years ago, I jumped from a moving train pulling out of New Delhi, India. I landed smartly on top of a thief who had grabbed my goodies and sprinted down the aisle. He, however, had passed my stuff off quickly to someone else aligned with Team Grab. It ended up in a dicey midnight walk escorted by somewhat uncaring police a kilometer back to the station. It took over a week, multiple tea sessions at banks, lots of money for a new passport and photos, and a miracle rewrite of around the world airline ticket. For years, I reigned as the gutsy muscle diva who took action.

Today, however, my girlfriend, who is turning 70 in a few weeks, grabbed the award off my dusty shelf.

We were riding on a local bus in beautiful Costa Rica. I had pressed the button to alert the driver of a stop. All was running quite smoothly and appeared amazingly civilized. I exited the bus first and then waited for my friend who I thought was directly behind me. I looked up and could see her in the mash of people deboarding. So now here is how a bait and switch occurs, at least on a local bus in Costa Rica.

The sweet girl in front of my friend suddenly dropped her watch and some coins. She strongly pushed my friend backwards, as she scrambles to pick up her things. As my friend is rebalancing from the abrupt shove, the guy behind her quickly unzips her purse and snags her wallet. Now, here is the sophisticated part of the story.

As the sweet girl deboards, she drops her bracelet and coins again. Always helpful, my friend stops to help her, allowing the thief behind her to slip past to a car that is waiting directly behind the bus. Sweet girl then moves directly to the awaiting car. I might add that, though the locals did not move to help, they pointed out the car.

Suddenly my girlfriend gets an intuitive message from on high: "CHECK YOUR WALLET." As I stand there, somewhat dazed, my friend runs to the car, positions herself in front of it, and demands the return of her wallet.

This amazing woman stands there not

budging. In a short time, someone of (4) in the car rolls down the back window (it was a banger car) and hands out the wallet. My heroine goes serenely to the back of the car and calls out the license number which I write down.

Now, the somewhat humorous part is that this was a well trafficked road. It wasn't exactly a speedy getaway like on NCIS. The car had to wait for traffic to clear, allowing us time to get the data. I rather think, however, that they were also bait and switch license plates.

We went immediately to the local police station and filed a report. On looking back, this operation obviously stalks at bus stations. When a couple of likely targets get on, or they see them from outside the window, the two or three running the hit get on and calculatedly place themselves near the intended victims. The car follows the bus. Diva heroine in rehashing the event said, "Shoot! I should've checked the wallet and said, NOW GIVE ME MY MONEY BACK."

I say she gets the award for holding thieves ransom by standing DIRECTLY in front of the car.

Now, you can say this was extremely risky business. They might have had a gun, or a more obvious method would have been to have run her over and escape. Remember, traffic was in a snarl, so killing an expat pedestrian wouldn't be wise. Besides, this was a petty gang, admittedly slick, but petty.

Tonight you can bet that Team Grab is having a cerveza or two and shaking their little heads about the gutsy babe who shouted, "GIVE ME MY WALLET!"

So what can we learn from this?

1. As with all bait and switch operations, the team effort is to create a diversion. In Italy, its packs of cute kids, near the Vatican, surround unassuming tourists. In this instance, it was the sweet girl shoving my girlfriend backwards for the hit.

2. The operation is so rehearsed that, in most instances, the thieves are long gone before the victim even has a clue what is missing.

In this case, my friend "sensed" something

was wrong and acted immediately.

3. When traveling on local transport or walking through crowds, it is better to go light. If you need your passport, stuff it in a sock or wear it inside a body pack UNDER a loose shirt.

4. Don't carry a designer purse or wear hanging earrings. First of all, it can save your ear lobes from yanking. Most important, both scream: "TAKE ME!"

Bottom line, this can happen anywhere, at any time, in any country on earth. Awareness is the key. Guts is the fabulous factor that saved the day.

I don't recommend using yourself as a body shield or car block, but I so wish I had taken a picture.

Power to the Seniors! There's one pack that won't mess with an older American woman in the near future.

So the key things to remember are:

1. Presence of mind: stay focused on what YOU are doing.

2. Stay cool.

3. Remember details and get the license, if a car is involved.

4. SIMPLIFY in the future.

Naivete has no place when travelling alone and on the hoof.

Sixty dollars was all she lost. Her credit cards and passport were also in that wallet.

One grab could have had it all.

Having survived three robberies internationally, I now carry my cash, passport and credit cards INSIDE my stretch socks that I wear on the plane. Remember, you can also get hit on the plane.

When I can, I wear a money belt inside my loose clothing. If on a train, I sleep with my hand around my money belt. OK, I'm starting to sound paranoid, but I CHOOSE to travel alone. It's my gig and my drama.

Before I leave my own zip code, I make copies of the following: Airline ticket, credit cards, passport and visas, #s of credit card companies, airlines and embassies. I leave a copy with a friend or relative at home and HAND CARRY the other.

Let's face it, it's a pain in the backside, but it saves time and keeps you safe and sound.

# Bob Hampshire



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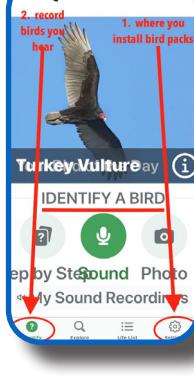
## What is that Bird?

### By Annette Rodgers Purther

I want to share the Smartphone Bird App I use most to identify birds I see/hear and explain how I use it. I'll only do a starter course, as it got complicated as I was creating it. Ugh! ☺

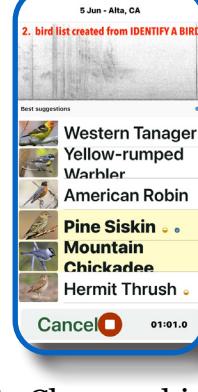
**The Merlin Bird ID by Cornell Lab** is free and very easy to use, if you know a few things ahead of time. I don't remember setting up the app, so just follow the prompts; but I have learned a lot while using the app and the way to learn it, is to use it.

1. Once you install the app, you will need to go into settings at the bottom right (of each page/screen). SETTINGS - Install bird packs - US: West Coast will start you off, and as you travel on holiday to other states east, north, or south, you can choose other geographical bird packs, initially in settings.



2. IDENTIFY A BIRD - Here you can walk out on the deck with Smartphone in hand, press the microphone, lay down your phone, go make a cup 'O something to drink, and return to find a list of birds that have been

singing while you were gone. Notice the number of birds I captured in 1 minute! I was so amazed; I now look for those birds I don't visually see. The yellow shows the current bird singing, and blinks every time that bird is heard. Go further and press on a bird and it'll tell you about the bird just like in EXPLORE-which is next on my list.



3. EXPLORE - Choose which bird pack you want at the top right; these will be bird packs you have already downloaded previously. Initially you will probably only be using West Coast Birds, but when you travel to other parts of the country, you will want to check out their birds. In EXPLORE, I want to know what bird I am seeing/hearing. If you have no idea what family or species it is in, click on the most similarly-shaped bird on the vertical right column of birds; this is an enormously helpful aid in finding your bird. This will take you to that particular group of likely birds, like a vireo or thrush or...which can be difficult to find. Notice that the bird packs have an order: Waterbirds,

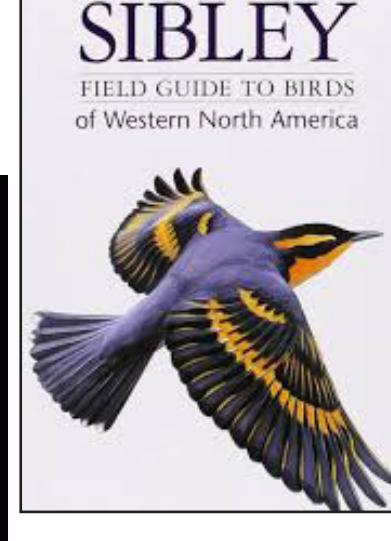
Shorebirds, Cranes & Herons, etc. When you get used to how birds are ordered, you will begin to get more comfortable with using this app. Scroll down once you find your bird to get ID info, sounds, and the bird's range.



If you do not have a Smartphone, I suggest THE SIBLEY Field Guide To Birds of Western North America - by David Allen Sibley. There are many choices out there, but this is my go-to. This book has an order to the list of species starting with water birds, etc; which is very similar to the Merlin App.

I hope I have shared something to help you along this path of enjoying our wild birds.

Like my Facebook page, "Placer County Wildlife" where I try to only post wildlife education, information, and funnies pertaining to our local Placer County area.



**Susan Winje**  
(530) 389-8000

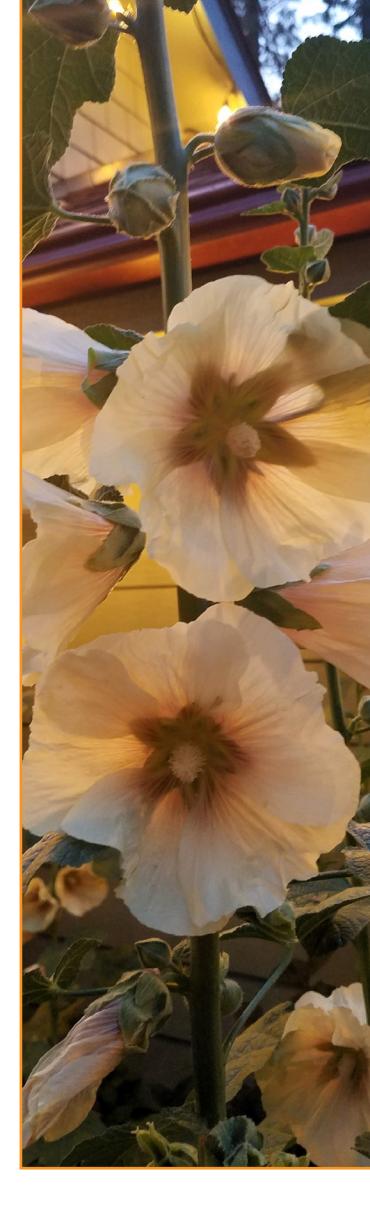
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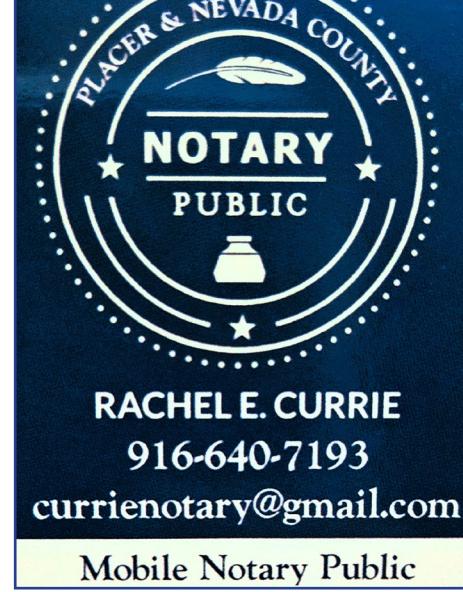
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