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Santa Cruz Sentinel

Sunday, February 1, 2015 \$1.50 FACEBOOK.COM/SCSENTINEL TWITTER.COM/SCSENTINEL santacruzsentinel.com

A YEAR AWAY

Counting down to Super Bowl 50

Santa Clara committee gets preview of coming attraction for 2016

By Mark Purdy
San Jose Mercury News

PHOENIX » Michael Sellers has been here all week. His eyes have seen the glory of the Tostito's Party Zone. They have also seen the Verizon Super Bowl Central Street Fair. Not to mention the Bud Light Hotel. And the NFL Experience En-

SUPER BOWL XLIX

What: New England vs. Seattle.
When: 3:20 p.m. Sunday.
Television: NBC
Sponsored by GMC. And the Tazon Latino celebrity flag football game. And the VH1 Papa John's Concert for the Troops. And the dozens of other events spread out

across the Arizona landscape, a mongrel carnival of pop culture and football noise. "Unless you actually are here to see it, you have no idea how large this is," said Sellers, who happens to be the police chief of Santa Clara, which means that in 12 months he will have a very busy work shift. "This is a huge

FOOTBALL » PAGE 5



A Seattle Seahawks logo shown on the phone of Jeff Dye, right, as he takes a selfie with his wife Tina in front of the Super Bowl XLIX numerals.
DAVID GOLDMAN — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NATURE

THE CROW NEXT DOOR



SHMUEL THALER — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

A crow lifts off from a perch in Scotts Valley Middle School.

Learning to live with the urban explosion of crows and ravens

By Nicholas Weiler
newsroom@santacruzsentinel.com

They're smart and resourceful — and they're flocking to Northern California cities in record numbers. They know this is where all the opportunity is these days.

Crows and ravens were once rare in urban areas, but now they seem to be everywhere. They cluster in parks and scrounge behind dumpsters, cackling and bawling and fixing passersby with calculating stares.

"They're a nuisance," said Yvonne Hager, owner of Heather's Made To Go, a drive-thru coffee shop in Scotts Valley. "They've stolen three pastries from me this week!"

But ecologists say it's time the locals learn to love their noisy new neighbors: Crows and ravens are probably here to stay. These clever birds thrive in our cities because, in many ways, they're so much like us.

Counting crows

Volunteers in the Audubon Society's annual Christmas Bird Count first noted a few dozen crows living in San Jose in the early 1950s. Since then the birds have flourished.

By the 1980s, San Jose volunteers were documenting hundreds of crows during the annual daylong count, and in the past five years they have counted an average of 1,200 crows in the city. Bird watchers around the Bay Area and Central Coast

have reported the same explosive growth.

When crows first started showing up in Palo Alto in the 1970s, "it was something people talked about," said Steve Bouman, author of the Breeding Bird Atlas of Santa Clara County and longtime record-keeper for the local Audubon Society. "Now they're a common bird. I hear them almost every morning."

The story is much the same for ravens. Raven sightings were almost unheard of outside Marin County until the 1990s, but Audubon volunteers around the greater Bay Area now count hundreds of them each year.

Tricksters, troublemakers

As cousins in the corvid family, crows and ravens can be hard to tell apart at first glance. But ravens are considerably larger than crows, sport thicker beaks and have beardlike tufts of feathers around their throats. Ravens also have deep creak-

ing voices, while crows have a higher-pitched caw. The birds also have distinct social lives. Ravens usually live alone or in mated pairs, while crows are more sociable, often living in large family groups in which elder siblings help parents care for younger chicks.

John Marzluff, a leading expert on crow and raven behavior at the University of Washington, said he sees a great deal of humanity in the corvid he studies. Like us, he said, they are long-lived and form long-lasting monogamous relationships. They are also among the most intelligent of bird species, rivaling many primates with their skillful tool use and ability to adapt to changing environments.

Urban crows have adapted to the human world around them, Marzluff said. In some cities they have learned to use cars to crack tough nuts and wait for walk signals to retrieve their

CROWS » PAGE 5

ACT OF TERROR

Islamic group beheads journalist

By Elaine Kurtenbach and Yuri Kageyama
The Associated Press

AMMAN, JORDAN » Japan condemned with outrage and horror on Sunday an online video that purported to show an Islamic State group militant beheading Japanese journalist Kenji Goto. The video posted on militant websites late Saturday Middle East time ended days of negotiations to save the man and heightened fears for the life of a Jordanian fighter pilot also held hostage.

TERROR » PAGE 5

SCIENCE

Crittercams show squids 'talking'

By Samantha Clark
sclark@santacruzsentinel.com
@samanthabclark on Twitter

PACIFIC GROVE'S Squids communicate by changing their body color with red and white flashes. Scientists have long known that this is how they talk, but what they're conveying has remained a mystery.

It's one that researchers at Stanford University's Hopkins Marine Station in Pacific Grove are solving by analyzing "crittercam" footage. This is the first research studying communication

SQUID » PAGE 2

Online: To see videos of the Humboldt squid changing colors, visit santacruzsentinel.com and click on this story.

EDUCATION

County's top spellers compete at UCSC

Students from across the county swarmed to UC Santa Cruz for the annual Santa Cruz County Spelling Bee. [PAGE C1](#)



WASHINGTON

Obama budget sets up battle with Congress

President's \$4 trillion budget irks GOP with proposed higher taxes on the rich and spending hike on programs. [PAGE A7](#)

DEADLY ACCIDENT

Dueling narratives over 'Suge' Knight incident

Hit-and-run that killed friend lands rap mogul in jail in latest run-in with the law, but some cast him as a victim. [PAGE C3](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA

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WHOLE FOODS MARKET

Crows

FROM PAGE 1

pulverized prizes. They're also attuned to individual humans. People who feed one crow will soon find themselves followed around by a flock of begging birds, Marzluff said.

And it's best not to get on their bad side. Eight years ago, Marzluff captured several crows while wearing a caveman mask. To this day, he said, every crow around will scold and dive-bomb him if he ventures on campus wearing the mask.

Even youngsters who weren't born at the time of the original "crime" had learned to treat the mask as a threat after seeing how older birds reacted to it, Marzluff said.

"The fact that they're watching us and paying attention to what we do, that's humbling," he said. "This is another form of life out there that's trying to do the same thing we are."

Keep your friends close

Crows and ravens have lived close to humans for millennia. The carrion crow haunted ancient battlefields, and early farmers learned to erect scarecrows to keep the birds away from their crops. Ravens in particular are central characters in ancient mythology. The Norse god Odin kept two ravens as his messengers, and native peoples of the Pacific Northwest told stories of Raven the Trickster who created the world by accident.

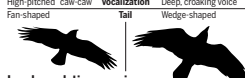
In the 19th century, crows were actually quite common in the Bay Area, according to contemporary naturalists. But as the

Quoth the raven: 'I'm not a crow'

These two species, American crows and common ravens, overlap widely throughout North America, including the Bay Area. They look quite similar, but with a bit of practice, you can tell them apart.

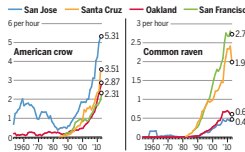


Table comparing American crow and Common raven characteristics: Length, Wingspan, Weight, Lifespan, Vocalization, Tail.



Local populations soaring

Data from annual Audubon Society bird counts show that crow and raven populations have been rising locally for decades. Below are the number of sightings per hour by Audubon Society volunteers in several Northern California cities as of 2013.



Note: Each data point represents the average of the preceding five years. Sources: Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Audubon Society, KQUP/SPIRIT/OLYMPIA BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

land was developed for agriculture, farmers shot them, poisoned them and chased them away. By the early 20th century they were rare outside of rural areas, where they foraged in woods and fields and stole human garbage and crops when they could get them.

But after World War II, as American suburbs spread, crows once again adapted to the changing

human landscape. With open spaces for foraging, trees to roost in at night and lots of garbage around, the suburbs were an ideal habitat.

Another big change came in 1972, when crows and ravens became protected under the Federal Migratory Bird Act, according to Kevin McGowan of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. This meant it was no longer

legal to shoot them without a federal permit.

Over several generations, the birds seem to have learned that our growing cities were now safe havens with plentiful food and limited predators, and they began to move to cities en masse.

Parkland predators

They may fascinate bird biologists, but the boom in corvid populations has ruffled feathers among wildlife ecologists, who say ravenous ravens in particular are a threat to sensitive bird species like the marbled murrelet, whose nests corvids prey on.

California park officials have sought to reduce raven populations by trapping and killing the birds, said Portia Halbert, an environmental specialist with State Parks, but the clever corvids quickly learned to recognize and avoid animal-control teams. To lull the ravens by surprise, she said, "They have to change clothes, change hats."

Instead, Halbert has spent the past 10 years re-vamping how the parks handle garbage and educating visitors about the need to eliminate the food scraps that draw ravens there.

These efforts have significant impacts on the number of ravens in the parks, Halbert said, but she acknowledged that at this point they are never going to be rid of them entirely.

"They're here," she said, "and they're here to stay." As Halbert's efforts illustrate, crows and ravens have adapted to living with us. Now we must adapt to living with them.

Football

FROM PAGE 1

learning opportunity for me, being here."

Chief Sellers is hardly the only Bay Area visitor to the desert this weekend. One year from now, the milestone 50th anniversary of North America's most popular sporting event will be staged at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara.

But if you are a Northern California resident during the buildup to the Feb. 7, 2016 kickoff ... well, unless you crawl under a rock on Alcatraz for the entire month, you will be unable to avoid the Super Bowl machinery and vines.

That is why some 20 people are here from the Super Bowl 50 Host Committee in San Francisco to take notes. So are more than 30 public officials and fire and police personnel from Santa Clara and San Francisco. So are a number of 40ers employees. It's like a diplomatic mission with officially licensed merchandise stands.

All of those folks, however, are staying plenty busy. They are ferrying themselves from site to site to site on an event footprint that stretches 30 miles from Scottsdale on the east side of the Salt River Valley across downtown Phoenix and Super Bowl headquarters out to the western suburb of Glendale, where the game actually will be played.

It is a rough parallel to the Super Bowl 50 blueprint that calls for most of the major hospitality events to occur in San Francisco before the game takes place 48 miles away in the South Bay — although organizers stress that their mission is to involve the entire Bay

Area as much as possible. One idea, for example, is to have the 49ers' five Super Bowl trophies and the Raiders' three Super Bowl trophies united in an unprecedented kumbaya spirit, then take them on some sort of grand tour of the region from Monterey to Walnut Creek to Santa Rosa, so that fans can have their photos taken with the eight pieces of hardware.

There are other plans, too, although the organizers want to keep many of them secret. They might also steal some ideas from what's happening here. As Sellers sits in on law enforcement meetings with his counterparts here, Keith Bruce has been trying to visit every single spot on the Super Bowl map, leading to 12-hour days in Phoenix. Bruce, a 49-year-old Novato resident with a deep background in global sports marketing, is president of the Super Bowl 50 Host Committee.

"The scale of it is pretty amazing," Bruce said. "There are so many moving parts to it. But we feel good about where we are in our planning. Because as we say, the minute the game is over Sunday we go live. We're up next. We're on the clock. However you want to put it, we've been building up to this moment to be ready for it."

The picture of what the next Bay Area Super Bowl will look like — the 1985 game at Stanford was the first — is also coming into sharper focus. And there are some interesting developments, with a few questions still to be answered.

For the most part, the committee's promise to be as regionally inclusive as possible is being honored. Thursday night, Bruce and committee chairman Daniel Lurie hosted a media reception at a downtown Phoenix ate. It featured wines from Sonoma County and sourdough bread from San Francisco. Large posters above the food tables featured two slogans: "We're Not Just Hosting a Super Bowl, We're Redefining It" and "The Bay Area's Super Bowl."

Sellers also believes that the cooperation he sees here between law enforcement agencies will be matched next year back in the Bay Area.

"It just seems like everybody is working well together," Sellers said. "There are no egos." Sites are set Big sports events have an odd way of doing that. Most of the sites for next year are set. The media center and interactive NFL Experience will be at Moscone Convention Center. The Fan Village with food and drink and music will be nearby, most likely along the waterfront. The big Friday Night Party is scheduled for San Francisco City Hall.

But other locations remain up in the air. In the original Super Bowl bid, Tuesday morning's annual media day was penciled in for Levi's Stadium and the participating teams were scheduled to practice every day at Stanford and San Jose State. But those choices are being reconsidered for logistical reasons, namely the prospect of bus-ing fans and media from potential San Francisco hotel headquarters. The problem is, there aren't any suitable practice facilities in San Francisco.

Bruce explained that the NFL will make the call on these decisions, probably by March or April. League offi-

cials have already made five site visits to San Francisco and Santa Clara, as well as to possible practice sites in the East Bay such as Berkeley and the Raiders' Alameda facility.

It should all work out. The committee has set up a website, www.superbowl.com, where charities can apply for grants from the "50 Fund" and volunteers can apply to work at the various Super Bowl venues. Jed York, the 49ers' owner and CEO, said here that he's feeling good about the way things are coming together and believes the game should help foster regional cooperation in many areas, including public transportation.

"This is the type of event that lowers barriers," York said.

Return engagement The primary goal, above all else, is to perform well enough that the NFL wants to bring the Super Bowl back to the bay every five or six years. What's the old saying about getting only one chance to make a good first impression?

"We know expectations are high," Bruce said. "We need to deliver a Super Bowl that is basically seen by the NFL as the best Super Bowl ever produced or one of the best ever managed, so that we can get on that so-called rotation."

Then, trying to answer another question as he sat in his hotel lobby in the midst of a crazy week, Bruce shook his head and laughed.

"I'm trying to think what I was doing this morning," Bruce said.

He was already on the clock. It seemed, by Monday morning, that countdown moves to the entire Bay Area.

That hostage, Haruna Yukawa, was shown as purportedly killed in an earlier video.

The fates of Goto, a 47-year-old freelance journalist. For the Jordanian pilot, Lt. Muath Kaseasbeh, had been linked by the militants, but Saturday's video made no mention of the airman. Jordan's government spokesman, Mohammed al-Momani, declined comment. Earlier this week, Jordan had offered to free an al-Qaida prisoner for the pilot, but a swap never moved forward.

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Terror

FROM PAGE 1

"I feel indignation over this immoral and heinous act of terrorism," Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told reporters after convening an emergency Cabinet meeting.

"When I think of the grief of his family, I am left speechless," he said. "The government has been doing its utmost in responding to win his release, and we are filled with deep regret."

He vowed that Japan will not give in to terrorism and will continue to provide humanitarian aid to countries fighting the Islamic State extremists.

The White House released a statement in which President Barack Obama also condemned "the heinous murder" and praised Goto's reporting, saying he "courageously sought to convey the plight of the Syrian people to the outside world."

Obama applauded Japan's "steadfast commitment to advancing peace

and prosperity in the Middle East and globally, including its generous assistance for innocent people affected by the conflicts in the region."

"I was hoping Kenji would come back alive to thank everyone who had supported him," Goto's brother Junichi told Japanese public broadcaster NHK TV. "I am filled with sadness he couldn't do."

Goto's mother, Junko Ishido, told NHK TV her son's death showed he was a kind, gentle man, trying to save another hostage.