

Rare bird

Katie Bird, local education programs coordinator for AmeriCorps, leads bird-watching walks and other education programs, including a new bi-weekly nature journaling program at Rancho San Rafael Regional Park for home-schooled students. The next is on Feb. 12. Kids and parents should bring their own journals, but colored pencils and other supplies are provided. Learn more here: goo.gl/gGoJAC.

I have to say I was stoked to see birding led by Katie Bird.

Yeah, it definitely helps to have a name that matches my hobby.

What is your background. Are you an ornithologist?

Hopefully I'll become an ornithologist, eventually. I just graduated from University of Delaware, where I studied wildlife ecology, so more general than just birds—but I really love birds, so that's more of my background. ... And the arboretum is very plant-focused, so I want to delve into aspects of botany and other fields. ... Now, I'm focusing as more of general educator trying to get people to connect with the gardens, because they're an incredible community resource. There are plants here from all over the world.

How did you come up with this program?



PHOTO/JERI CHADWELL

I was interested in getting involved with home-schoolers, because I work during the week. Getting kids here during the school year is difficult. And I was home-schooled when I was little. I kind of looked into what the home-schooling scene was here, went through a lot of Facebook groups. ... And then I was doing a lot of research on different home-schooling methods—so I got really deep into the Charlotte Mason rabbit hole. A bit more than a hundred years ago, she was a teacher in England ... and her whole philosophy was that kids learn the best outside, which is kind of my whole philosophy. A lot of people who do Charlotte Mason's method do nature journaling. And then I discovered this guy from California named John Muir Laws, and he wrote this awesome book *Nature Drawing and Journaling*. He teaches you how to develop your inquiry skills, so you

can go outside and ask lots of questions and develop a scientific mindset but, you know, for your own benefit. ... So I started nature journaling to experiment with it—so this is my journal.

Wow, you already had artistic skill.

Well, I like to draw, and part of the reason I wanted to get into this was because I wanted to draw more, and I never had an outlet for it in college. ... John Muir Laws is really big on learning to ask questions, which I think is really important because too many adults lose that. ... Working with kids is a great way to relearn how to ask questions yourself, because kids have never been taught to stop asking questions.

So kids—and the parents—are encouraged to draw and journal, too?

A big part of the research I've done says that if the parents are drawing alongside them, they're being a role model. And I think parents can get a lot of joy out of it, too. ... It's not just about drawing. So today, actually, we're going to focus on using words. If you see, I have a lot of writing in my journal. And one big thing I'm interested in is poetry, so today we're going to write poems about what we're doing. Our warmup will be inside. I'm going to bring a falcon taxidermy into the class and have them write as many things as they notice about it—just like braindumping all of the words and things you can connect to that animal and then using that as building blocks for a poem. □

NOTES FROM THE NEON BABYLON

BY BRUCE VAN DYKE

The box score, so far

It's been the common opinion for some time now that *Saturday Night Live*, while OK, just isn't the same show it used to be "back in the day."

Hogwash, poppycock and balderdash. I've been watching regularly the last few years, and while none of the players are stars along the lines of Belushi, Murray, Murphy, Farley and the like—although Kate McKinnon is gettin' there—the truth is the writing is both consistent and *funny*. Every week, there are a few good sketches that bring real laughs, proving once again that life in Trumpistan has provided career-boosting energy to Colbert, Kimmel, Conan, Maher, *SNL*, *Daily Show*, CNN, MSNBC, and on and on and on. No doubt about it, President Capone is comedy gold in a mind-boggling, expletive-sputtering, hair-pulling, teeth-gnashing way.

Just in case you're keeping score out there in Rest Area, Missouri—I'm stealing that crack from last week's *SNL*—here's an update from The Big Board of Collusion, Corruption, More Corruption, Still More Corruption, and A Truly Breathtaking Amount of Corruption.

Hillary Clinton Benghazi Witch Hunt, in which Trey Gowdy and other Republican mouth-breathers posing as congressmembers went after her with every speck of bullshit they could scrape out of the corral. Length of investigations—*four years*. Four effing years. Investigations—*eight*. Indictments—*zero*. Convictions—*zero*. As in Nada Zilch Zippo.

Hillary Clinton Email Witch Hunt. Length of investigation—*2 years*. Indictments—*zero*. Again with the Nada Zilch and Zippo.

Obama Administration. Number of indicted employees—*zero*. Once more, NZZ. Gee, how absolutely—

boring! What a bunch of goody two-shoes! Conscientious people who didn't get arrested. With the swearing in of Twitler, that would all change.

Trump Russian Witch Hunt, still ongoing in its 20th month. Indictments (individuals)—*38 (and counting)*. Indictments (companies)—*3*. Guilty pleas—*8 (and counting)*, including Michael Flynn, Mike Cohen, George Low Level Coffee Boy, Richard Pinedo, Alex van der Zwaan, Rick Gates, Mata Hari Butina, and Sam Patten. Convictions—*1*. Manafort. Russians who will be convicted if they ever set foot on U.S. soil—*24 (and counting)*. Criminal charges—at least *190*.

Is Mueller finished? Yeah, right. Dum Dum is to corruption what eggs are to breakfast. So far, this has all been slow, carefully orchestrated foreplay. The money shots are coming. Crash helmet strapped down? □



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