

# THE CALIFORNIA ACORN REPORT

Volume 17

The Official Newsletter of the California Acorn Survey  
Walt Koenig and Jean Knops, co-directors

11 October 2013

Editor: Walt Koenig

SPECIAL AARP-ENDORSED  
LARGE(R) PRINT EDITION!

## SEGUIMIENTO DE BELLOTA EN ESPAÑA

Welcome to the 2013 *California Acorn Report*. At least one or two long-time subscribers will recall that once upon a time the survey included a gratuitous trip to the Minnesota State Fair, during which we would, if we remembered, count acorns at Cedar Creek north of Minneapolis. No longer. The Minnesota acorn survey is now officially kaput, having been killed off because after 17 years we had finally run out of mini-donut jokes. While waiting for new inspiration to hit us, however, we decided that we needed to once again expand our oakly horizons, and eventually settled on Spain while finishing up a dinner of *tapas* at **Just a Taste**, our favorite restaurant off the Ithaca Commons.

Fortuitously, it turned out to be a good choice. Spain has oaks up the wazoo along with a host of great researchers interested in them both for economic reasons as well as their acorns (you can never *contar* too many *bellotas*, as they say over there). Hence the *California Acorn Survey* team made not one, but two trips to Spain this year, and reciprocated by hosting Maria Carbonero, an acorn enthusiast from Córdoba, who not only spent time at Hastings and Ithaca, but—despite international sanctions and repeated warnings from the Spanish consulate—let herself be dragged along on the *California Acorn Survey* itself, thus breaking the long, sexist tradition of male domination in the California acorn-counting arena. More on this shocking revelation later.



*A typical Spanish dehesa, with a horse enjoying the shade and contemplating the idyllic Iberian landscape while the ripening corks sway gently from the branches of the oaks. Off in the distance, local peasants joust playfully with the windmills.*

The first trip in March, on which I cajoled Janis into joining me, included Barcelona, where we investigated the role of acorns as inspiration for Gaudi, to Léon, where we were shocked to learn that our good friends Vittorio and Daniela study cooperative breeding in crows rather than woodpeckers. We then went south to Huelva where we spent several days hosted by Reyes Alejano, who really does study *dehesa* acorn production and who we got to know when she visited Hastings in 2007. Thanks to all for a great trip!

*Yours truly, Janis, and Reyes in front of the Monumento natural encina dehesa de San Francisco, a holm oak famous for something (I can't remember what), but in any case casts good shade for enjoying those fabulous jamón ibérico sandwiches.*



The second trip in May involved giving a talk in Pamplona along with a side trip to San Sebastian to check out the *pinxtos* that I'd been hearing about for years from Michael Jones at Monday night dinners in Cachagua. Inexplicably the streets were full of people, not bulls, but the food was great and it was fun getting to meet the Spanish acorn crowd.

*Yours truly with Carmen Padilla, a Spanish acorn student who was kind enough to hang out with me at the Pamplona conference despite being far too young and energetic to be wasting her time on the geriatric crowd. Thanks Carmen, and congratulations! You've won a free one-year subscription to the California Acorn Report of your choice.*



## ACORNS? IN ALASKA?

The *California Acorn Survey* team by no means restricted its peripatetic explorations this year to the Iberian Peninsula. Indeed, with Phoebe in her second summer up in Homer, we ended our west coast field season with a visit aimed at trying to stop her from hitchhiking into the Alaskan wilderness and ending her days in an abandoned bus only to starve and be found months later by passing moose hunters.

As it turns out, this wasn't nearly the threat it seemed to be from Carmel Valley; Homer is not the middle of nowhere, although you can, literally, see it from there. We had a fabulous week visiting with Phoebe and her friend Peter, eating at several fine Homeric establishments including the **Saltry** at Halibut Cove (recommended by our very own Alaskan experts Ben and Cate), hiking Kachemak Bay State Park, and watching the brown bears at Katmai National Park pretend like they're big and mean. We didn't see any acorns, but figure that if they aren't there now, they probably will be in just a few thousand years as Hastings (along with a good chunk of California) continues its inexorable trek toward the Aleutian trench and its ultimate demise beneath the North American Plate.



*Phoebe and Janis, both cuter than ever, at the world-famous Grateful Dead End in Homer. As you can see, it's a pretty hip place.*



*Having taken a break after her sophomore year at Reed, Phoebe is now back in Ithaca taking chemistry, intro bugs, and intro to behavior (Go Big Red!) and is, by a remarkable coincidence, flirting with the idea of majoring in Acorn Studies. (Who knew?) We consider this all a good thing, especially given that acorn counting, like the British monarchy, is a traditionally hereditary title and it's high time my kids started training to take over the job. In any case, here she is on our trip to Halibut Cove, Alaska, it would appear, agrees with her.*

## THE SEPTEDECIM CICADA COUNT

Although we at the *California Acorn Survey* devote as much of our time as possible to acorns, it can be a long haul waiting for fall, and in order not to lose our edge we occasionally hone our skills by counting other things. Cookies. Pistachios. Calories. And, lest I forget, cicadas. Unfortunately, the opportunity to count cicadas doesn't come every day. In fact, it only comes every 17 years, at least in upstate New York. The good news is that 2013 was *the year*, with Brood II of *Magicicada* emerging in early June. Fortuitously, this was when I happened to be back in Ithaca, so Janis and I, accompanied by our good friends Steve and Natalia, drove down to New Paltz on June 1<sup>st</sup> to meet up with Rick Karban, a colleague from UC Davis who has been studying Brood II since its emergence in 1979—one year longer than we've been counting acorns, if you can believe it.



*Rick Karban, the cicada whisperer. Rick was my postdoc Ian's Ph.D. advisor at UC Davis and is one of a handful of dedicated scientists who have devoted*

*their careers, or at least 1/17<sup>th</sup> of their careers, to figuring out the complexities of periodical cicadas—a noble endeavor and one that arguably verges on being crazier than counting acorns.*

As it happens, it was a good thing we came, because there were a *lot* of cicadas to count and I don't think even Rick would have been able to keep track of them all without us. It was truly a fabulous experience, and quite educational, since Rick knows a great deal about cicadas, having had a lot of time to think about them while waiting for the next emergence. Meanwhile, it was about time I finally saw these beasts, having experienced them previously only once in 1956 when Brood XIII emerged in northern Illinois back when banding baby woodpeckers and counting acorns was but a gleam in my eye.

By the way, the main draw of the New Paltz region, at least when the cicadas aren't around, is the Mohonk Mountain House, a little-known enclave where acorn counters from around the world gather to rest and receive free massages while preparing for their surveys. Not. Actually, it's a very fancy resort

the likes of which we would like to become accustomed, but have merely experienced briefly in summer 2002 when we went to Nova Scotia so Janis and Dale could attend fiddle camp on Cape Breton Island.



*And here, for the Strolling Down Memory Lane Department, is our dinner at the Mohonk Mountain House in summer 2002 when Dale was 13, Phoebe 10, and Janis 39. This was back in the days when we would take vacations on the East Coast; now, of course, we spend all our spare time at Ranch'o Search'o No-Mor'o. Maybe we'll finally vacation in the east when we retire to California?*



*Rarely does the California Acorn Survey begin with the caliber of festivities we had at **The Antlers** (1159 Dryden Rd., Ithaca) on Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>. I jest. The dinner was actually in honor of our friend and colleague Paul Sherman's retirement. It was nonetheless a fitting start to the acorn-counting season, and included several long-time subscribers as well as a host of acorn-counting wanna-bees. From the left: Yours Truly, Dustin Rubenstein, Jan Shellman-Sherman, Paul, Sam Flaxman, Paul Watson, Janis, Mark Hauber, Pete Buston, Eileen Lacey, and Steve Emlen. Paul and Jan have retired to southern Oregon, no doubt in order to more efficiently contribute Q. garryana counts to the California (Pacific Coast?) Acorn Survey.*

## GENTLEPEOPLE: START YOUR COUNTING

The fateful day finally came on Tuesday, Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup>. Actually, it started at 11 pm on Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup> when United Airlines called to cheerfully tell me that my flight from Ithaca had for no obvious reason been cancelled. The good news is that I was able to switch my flights and make arrangements for the ASAP Cab Company to take me to the Syracuse airport at 4 am the next morning for the bargain price of \$110,

essentially what it costs to rent a car and drive. The bad news is that I was then summarily bumped off the flight to Newark. The good news is that I squeezed onto a flight to Chicago where I then caught the next flight to San Francisco, arriving 10 minutes *before* my originally scheduled arrival time. The \$500 travel voucher I got in Syracuse took the sting away from the day's hassle and assuaged my annoyance at the obvious conspiratorial attempts to block the *California Acorn Survey*.

And with that, the count was on! As mentioned earlier, Maria, a Spanish acorn counter from Córdoba with a keen interest in *dehesa* agroforestry, had arranged to come along. Having arrived a couple of days earlier, I tracked her down at United arrivals and subsequently waited for Bill Carmen to come by and pick us up.

Bill, as most of you know, is the official Drinkmaster of the *California Acorn Survey*, a full-time job that he occasionally takes time off from to tag along and count a few acorns. This year, with Jean back from China and Maria here from Spain, he restricted his activities to chauffeuring on Arrival Day and helping with the Hastings count, which was great since I'm not sure how we could have fit everything in otherwise. Picking us up at SFO, we proceeded to Jasper Ridge where we met Ian and got dressed for the opening ceremonies.

*Bill, giving the traditional salute signalling the start of the California Acorn Survey at Jasper Ridge on Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup>. The 3-hr time difference from the east coast offers the potential for getting in nearly a full day of counting despite starting the day in New York. Unfortunately, Ithaca is the kind of place where airlines cancel flights in order for staff to schedule pedicures, so planning trips from there is not a slam-dunk.*



From Jasper Ridge, Ian returned to Davis while Bill, Maria, and I drove to Santa Cruz and counted the tanoaks on Empire Grade just north of the UCSC campus. We then picked up Jean, who had arrived that afternoon from Nebraska, at the Monterey Airbus station in Monterey, after which we had dinner at **Mi Tierra** and finished the day with the

long drive up Carmel Valley to Hastings and Ranch'o Search'o No-Mor'o.



*As yet another irrelevant photo-op, here is the spring 2013 Hastings crowd at the Ranch'o Search'o No-Mor'o July 4<sup>th</sup> potluck. Among the notables are Vince, the great new Hastings manager, on the far right; Joey, Eric, and Caglar, the current and former Hastings postdoc crew, in back on the left; Maria and Aisha (Caglar's SO), in between Joey and Eric; Janis, grad student Natasha, Sandy (Vince's SO), Julie Joe (Eric's SO), and Devin (one of our REUs) sitting in front on my left; and our fabulous crew of (mostly) interns and Cornell REU students everywhere else. Not pictured: Ian, who was busy having a kid up in Davis, and our dog Beezel, who took the photo. (You can't imagine how long it took to train her to keep everyone in focus.) Thanks for another great year guys!*

The real logistic problem this year was scheduling the statewide survey such that we could get Maria to her flight home on Sept. 12<sup>th</sup>. This required not only arriving on time Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup>, a feat that I succeeded in accomplishing despite United's best attempts, but also leaving the next day on the statewide survey. And so, without further ado, Jean, Maria and I packed up the MPV the morning of Sept. 4<sup>th</sup> and headed south. Highlights were as follows:

*Day 1: Hastings to Sedgwick via Pozo.* Having left on the late side, I didn't manage to finish reading the iButtons at Sedgwick until 9 pm. Fortunately, Jean had picked up beer at Trader Joe's in Templeton and thus he and Maria were not unduly put out waiting.

*Sedgwick Reserve, one of our more serene sites, the morning of Day 2. It's also the site that has*



*changed the most since Jean and I were first greeted in 1994 by who I'm convinced was Gomez and Morticia Addams, who apparently had retired there. Managing an NRS site apparently didn't agree with them, however, and they left shortly thereafter.*

*Day 2: Sedgwick to the James Reserve via Switzer's.* Oddly enough, we were barely in front of a rainstorm threatening flash floods in the San Jacintos, a rare summer event made more ironic because of an earlier fire that had almost completely destroyed our coast live oak site part way up the mountain. This did make counting easier (there weren't any acorns), but whether the trees were



actually still alive or not will have to wait until 2014.

*Jean posing on one of our coast live oaks in the San Jacintos on Day 2. This area burns regularly but clearly got hit worse than usual this time around. Two of our trees were completely gone, while several others were so severely burned that it wasn't obvious whether they would make it or not. None had any acorns. Such are the hazards of being an oak in fire-prone regions, which pretty much includes the entire state.*

*Day 3: James Reserve to Westwood via Palomar Mountain and the Santa Rosa Plateau.* All went well; we even managed to navigate LA traffic and arrive at Brad and Louise's house in time for a huge bowl of Brad's famous popcorn along with a liesurely walk to **Chili Thai** on Pico Boulevard. We stopped only briefly at the Cahuila Indian Casino, a proud American institution that inexplicably failed



to garner much interest on the part of Maria. Our main disappointment, however, was the absence of tarantulas, which are often common at the Santa Rosa Plateau and no doubt would have made Maria's day.

*Your esteemed Editor, relaxing in his formal pajamas at Brad and Louise's after Day 3. As you all know, we at the California Acorn Survey are always at the cutting edge of fashion. Live long and prosper!*

*Day 4: Westwood to the San Joaquin Experiment Station via Liebre Mountain, Kaweah Oaks, and Kaweah River.* The big problem of Day 4 was the unexpected locked gate at Liebre Mountain. This happened once before in 2005, the year we eventually discovered the road on the far side of the mountain that is much farther away from our site but goes to the same place. Unfortunately, besides the locked gate, the mountain was officially closed as a fire hazard. (As if it's not a fire hazard every year there.) When we found the road, a nice but intransigent USFS guy was just about to go up and throw people out, making it impossible for us to sneak in.

*The far end of the USFS road at Liebre Mountain when we got there on Day 4. We did eventually make it to our site. The details, however, have been sworn to secrecy although they may have something to do with the fact that it doesn't look all that difficult to drive around that traffic cone.*



Having no choice but to move on, we counted at both Kaweah Oaks and Kaweah River and made it to the newly-renovated guest house at the San Joaquin Experiment Station just as it got dark. Thanks to Kathy Purcell and Renee Denton for arranging this; we particularly hope Kathy had a great time camping with her imaginary friend 'Ken', who we once again hope to 'meet' next year.

*Day 5: San Joaquin Experiment Station to Sierra Foothills via Yosemite and Davis.* As one always does with visitors, we were looking forward to showing off Yosemite Valley to Maria. Unfortunately, smoke from the Rim Fire made the experience less than ideal. On the other hand, we did get to see a bear up in a black oak apparently going after acorns, the first we've seen on the survey in some years.

*Jean and Maria at the overlook along the road into Yosemite Valley from Wawona on Day 5. The Valley is always impressive, but because of smoke from the Rim Fire this is the first time you couldn't see Half Dome. Or much of anything else, for that matter.*



*Day 6: Sierra Foothills to Dye Creek via Tower House and Trinity County.* Best wildlife of the day were the large numbers of Lewis's Woodpeckers flying around at Dye Creek, where the blue oak acorn crop was almost as good as it's ever been.

*Day 7: Dye Creek to Hopland via the scenic route.* With little to do besides count at Dye Creek and drive to Hopland, we spent time exploring the northwestern part of the Central Valley west of Willows, a largely uninhabited region far from the vast irrigated fields east of I5. We eventually made our way down to Hwy 20 and around Clear Lake. Then, having failed to show Maria the giant sequoias in Yosemite (the Rim Fire again), we drove north to Leggett so Maria could get a look at a really big tree. Next we went out to the coast on Hwy 1, south to Albion, and then inland back to Hopland. See California first!

*Maria at the 315 ft Drive-thru redwood outside of Leggett on Day 7. Maria was a lovely visitor and good sport, always cheerfully putting up with Jean and me despite the fact that we weren't always in the best of humor. We wish her the best of luck back in Spain, where she is training for the International Acorn Counting Championships being hosted by Brazil in 2014.*



*Day 8: Hopland to Hastings.* At Hopland we were met by Karen Mabry, a former UC Davis Aggie now at New Mexico State, and her grad student Tina, who work on mice at Quail Ridge and were interested in being trained in the black art of counting acorns. We recommended our Professional Acorn Counting Kit (\$99 at Amazon, with free shipping), but they insisted on seeing us in action and thus joined us for the morning. Hopefully they weren't too disappointed; if so, lunch at **Taqueria Jalos**, the taco truck at the corner of Hwy 101 and 175, hopefully made it all worthwhile. By the way, Karen, Tina, and Maria all passed the stringent tests required by the Professional Acorn Counter's Guild and will receive their Official Certificates in the mail as soon as they are illuminated by our scribes at the royal palace in Basantapur, Kathmandu.

## THE ANNUAL TAQUERIA REVIEW

All records were broken in the taco department this year, starting on our way to Hastings on Day 0. Traditionally (ever since last year, at any rate) we have dinner at the **Noodle Bar** (1944 Fremont Blvd., Seaside), but this year they actually wanted to close at 8 pm, prompting us to drive to **Mi Tierra** (1000 Broadway Ave., Seaside), our favorite Monterey Peninsula taqueria. In truth, the only reason *not* to eat at Mi Tierra is that we didn't want our taco experience to peak too early. I'm particularly partial to their fish tacos, but they're all excellent. The only downside here is that although they sell beer at the market, they don't have a liquor license allowing you to drink it on site, even, apparently, when the bottle is lamely hidden in paper bags as attempted by Bill and Jean. It's still a great place. Rating: **4 tacos**.

Next was **California Tacos** (606 Alamo Pintado Rd., Solvang) on Day 1 after counting at Sedgwick. In contrast to Mi Tierra, the tacos here were mediocre—a classification I sometimes forget is potentially applicable to tacos. Rating: **2 tacos**.

Day 3 brought us to **Jilberto's Taco Shop** (15265 Hwy 76, Pauma Valley) for lunch on our way down from Palomar Mountain. The tacos here were pretty good. Furthermore, the place has good Mexican atmosphere, from the bars on the windows to the Big Buck Hunter arcade game under the flat screen TV. The extensive menu offers a variety of combination plates and an intriguing 3-ft monster burrito for only \$40. All in all, a good bet after a hard day counting acorns on the mountain or gambling at one of the casinos that infest Pauma Valley. Rating: **3 tacos**.

Day 3 ended with dinner at **Chilli Thai** (10889 W. Pico Blvd, Los Angeles) which, in the absence of tacos on the menu, we will not discuss further.



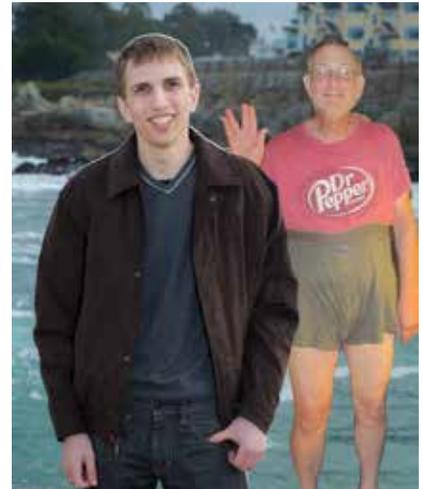
Jean, Brad, Louise, and Maria sporting their new Dr. Pepperwear at **Chilli Thai** at the end of Day 3. Brad and Louise, long-time

supporters of the California Acorn Survey, are living in a charming 1920s Westwood bungalow a couple of miles south of UCLA where Brad is now, as reported last year, Grand Dragon of the La Kretz Center for California Turtology. Thanks once again for putting up with us, guys, and best of luck navigating the world of southern California chain stores.

Lunch on Day 4 was at **El Grullense** (49713 Gorman Post Rd., Gorman) after our failed attempt to make it to the top of Liebre Mountain. This was our second time here after it was recommended by Brad in 2012. Although we thought it was OK last year, we liked it even more this time, perhaps because we splurged and ordered full lunch plates (Jean: *carnitas*; Maria and I: soft tacos) and found the beans and rice excellent. We also enjoyed the Mexican ambiance of plastic flowers, faux Thomas Kincaide paintings, disgusting bathrooms, and real Mexican music to which Maria sang along. The only problem was getting lost trying to find the place and ending up in the adjacent Ranch Restaurant, which is arguably a step up from the Sizzler that used to be there but clearly not a place where any sentient being would choose to eat. Rating: **3.5 tacos**.

Day 5 was tacoless, but dinner in Davis, where we were meeting son Dale, was at **The Dumpling House** (129 E St. #B), an honorary taqueria suggested by Ian and his wife Jill. I fear the dumplings, which (oddly enough) were all this place served, were not exactly great, but the waitress, Ms. Dumpling, was very sweet and having her fuss over us in her high, squeaky voice made the place worthwhile. Rating: **2.5 dumplings**.

*Yours Truly giving Dale a Vulcan 'way-to-go!' at Lover's Point in Pacific Grove. Dale, now in his second year in grad school at UC Davis, forgot he was supposed to meet us for dinner, forcing me to track him down after dumplings on Day 5. However, perhaps more importantly, he did remember to pass*



*his qualifying exams and is thus well on his way to becoming the official mathematician of the California Acorn Survey.*

Day 6 found us in Tehama, the smallest incorporated city in California with 418 residents. It was, however, big enough for a taco truck, which didn't appear to have a name beyond **Bienvenidos** (C St., Tehama). In any case, it was lunch time, so we stopped. Despite the lack of competition, 'Bienvenidos' was very good and definitely worth a stop, if not a special trip to Tehama. Rating: **3.5 tacos**.

Day 6 concluded with dinner at **O'Bliss** (1600 California St., Redding), which we will ignore due to the inexplicable lack of taco sushi on the Japanese/nouvelle California cuisine menu.

On our way around Clear Lake on Day 7 we had lunch at **Kapitan's Kafe** (6150 Hwy 20, Lucerne), an unlikely-looking taqueria we last ate at in 2009 (*CAR* vol. 13) when we gave it 2.5 acorns. This time we were more impressed. Despite non-Mexican items such as burgers, fish & chips, and chicken fried steak on the menu, the tacos were excellent, the poster for the 1976 Mexican movie *Zacazonapan* starring Lucy Tovar still up on the wall, and the tab (\$7.50 for all of us) unbeatable. Definitely an up-and-comer in the cutthroat California taqueria market. Rating: **3.5 tacos**.

Last but not least was **Taqueria Jalos Truck** (corner of Hwys 101 and 175, Hopland), where we had lunch on Day 8 after Hopland. Having tried pretty much every other place to eat in Hopland over the years, this is our favorite spot, even though the tacos were not the best of the trip. In any case, it was a fitting and satisfying wrap-up to yet another statewide survey. Rating: **3 tacos**.

## BACK AT THE RANCH'O

And then it was back to Carmel Valley minus Maria, who we left with Bill in Marin County in order to make her way back to Spain. The next several days, during which we conducted the 34<sup>th</sup> annual Hastings acorn survey, were more than usually frenetic, with Ian down from Davis to survey the oak flowers, Kyle doing xylem water potential, and a big Hastings Reservation 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary bash organized by Vince involving not only lots of locals but pretty much all of my former MVZ colleagues.



*Ian at work counting the acorns on marked branches to assess the success of the spring 2013 flowering effort. Ian's been a fabulous postdoc, and will be*

*sorely missed when he leaves for the Illinois Natural History Survey in January. We're counting on him continuing to collaborate in the future, however, and who knows? Despite his inexplicable predilection for the Midwest he might, if we're lucky, end up with a job back in California. We're keeping our fingers crossed, at any rate.*



*Making a cameo appearance at the Hastings acorn count was Kyle, who started out as a field assistant on the woodpecker project in 2008, graduated to surrogate-postdoc status on the oaks in 2009 and 2010, and then became Jean's Ph.D. student at the Univ. Nebraska studying resource storage and acorn production in oaks. He has his own field site near Weaverville in Northern California but shows up*

*occasionally at Hastings to cheer us on. Keep at it, Kyle! If you ever finish, I just might know of a potential (real) postdoc position for you.*

*Jim and Carol Patton with Yours Truly at the Hastings 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary dinner catered by Michael Jones (in the back next to the refrigerator). Jim, curator*



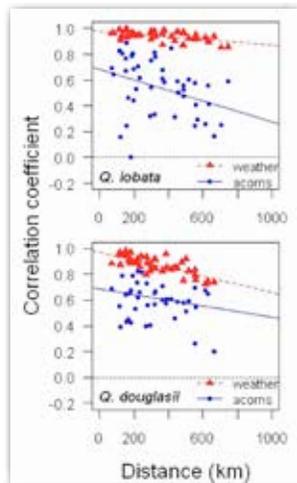
*emeritus of mammals at MVZ, retired in order to fulfill his dream of breaking the world record for gophers trapped by one person. I'm just kidding—he broke that record years ago. He and Carol have actually been traveling the world when they aren't in the Sierras resurveying mammals for MVZ's Grinnell Project.*

With the survey finally done for the year, perhaps you're wondering about the acorn crop? In short, it was mostly unexciting. Valley oaks were intermediate with the exception of Hopland, where they did quite well. Blue oaks were unexceptional everywhere except Dye Creek, where they did well. Canyon live oaks did relatively well with particularly good crops at Tower House (Shasta County) and at Switzer's (San Gabriel Mountains). California black oaks also did well, with particularly good crops at the James Reserve, Palomar Mountain, and Liebre Mountain. The only real failure was coast live oaks, which had the worst year ever at Hastings and were near the worst at several other sites as well. For details, contact our editorial offices.

## PUBLISH OR PERISH DEPARTMENT

First in the *P or P* department was a chapter comparing patterns of acorn production in Spanish *dehesas* and California oak savannas written with several Spanish colleagues, including Reyes, which came out in a book comparing Mediterranean oak

woodlands. Even more excitingly, we published a paper comparing spatial synchrony in valley and blue oaks (*Ecology* 94: 83-93; 2013). This was not the first paper to use data from the statewide survey but is the first to directly address one of the main questions we set out to answer when we started it in 1994: when it's a good acorn crop at Hastings, is it good in the Bay Area or in the Sierra foothills? In short, the answer is 'both'; there is significant spatial synchrony in both species throughout California. There is even strong spatial synchrony *between* the species: when it's a good crop for valley oaks in Shasta County, it's likely to be a good crop for blue oaks at Liebre Mountain 700+ kms away.



*Spatial synchrony in valley and blue oaks. Plotted are pairwise correlations between mean maximum April temperatures (triangles) and the mean acorn crop (circles) for valley (top) and blue (bottom) oaks vs. the distance between sites. Correlations are all positive; that is, the acorn crop is synchronous across sites hundreds of kms apart. Also, spatial synchrony of spring temperatures parallels that of acorn production, consistent with the hypothesis that spatial synchrony in the latter is being*

*driven by spatial synchrony in weather. Exactly how that might be accomplished is a question we're currently working on.*

Next, a long-time subscriber and friend of *The California Acorn Report*, Dave Kelly, published an intriguing paper earlier this year proposing that the difference in temperatures during the prior two years provides a general, arbitrary cue for masting. We love papers like this, as they make a fabulous straw man around which to base papers of our own. In this case, Ian used Dave's hypothesis as a basis for a paper on the proximate mechanisms driving masting behavior in valley oaks, while I used it as an excuse to write up some of our Cedar Creek data. In short, Dave's environmental cue hypothesis doesn't work for any of the oaks we know about. Furthermore, we believe there is a direct mechanistic relationship between spring conditions and acorn production, which we detail in a paper I've written but not gotten my act together to get published yet.

An there's more! Ian also wrote a paper focused on oak seedling surveys conducted by REUs Sophie Griswold and Desiree Pizarro, who counted an amazing 19,755 seedlings on Haystack Hill in 2011 and 2012, while a second more popular article on

masting is in the obscure but lovable *International Oaks*, a journal arguably even kinkier than the *California Acorn Report*.

*Although The California Acorn Survey has traditionally been partial to California, Ithaca—where we live these days when not counting acorns or banding baby woodpeckers—is a great place and the Editorial Staff is happy to be there. Particularly fun are unique opportunities such as playing cow-chip bingo in Cornell's Ag Quad—a game of skill and intrigue if ever there was one. I sure don't remember anything comparable on Sproul Plaza all those years I was in Berkeley. Come on, Bessie—a little over to the right....*



## WRAP-UP AND FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

And that, alas, is the end for the 2013 *California Acorn Report*. We gratefully acknowledge support from the National Science Foundation, which, despite the government shutdown, was once again voted the official science foundation of the *California Acorn Survey*. Our editorial offices are:

**Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road  
Ithaca, NY 14850 and Ranch'o Search'o No-Mor'o, c/o  
38601 E. Carmel Valley Rd., Carmel Valley, CA 93924  
(wdk4@cornell.edu)**

and

**School of Biol. Sciences, Univ. of Nebraska, 348 Manter  
Hall, Lincoln, NE 68588-0118 (jknops2@unl.edu)**

*The California Acorn Survey, founded in 1980, is an international conspiracy of nearly a dozen people dedicated to the understanding of acorn production by California oaks and the appreciation of fine taquerias everywhere. Names and years of servitude include*

Ron Mumme, Meadville, PA (1980-83)  
Mark Stanback, Davidson, NC (1989-90, 1992)  
Elizabeth Ross-Hooge, Mt. McKinley, AK (1991)  
Jay McEntee, Parts Unknown (2005)  
Xiaoan Zuo & Wenjin Li, Lanzhou, China (2010)  
Eric Walters, Norfolk, VA (2006-2010)  
Maria Dolores Carbonero Muñoz, Pozoblanco, Spain (2013)  
Ian Pearse, Davis, CA (2012-2013)  
Bill Carmen, Mill Valley, CA (1981-88, 90-92, 94-98, 2000-13)  
Jean Knops, Lincoln, NE (1993-2011, 2013)  
Walt Koenig, Ithaca, NY/Jamesburg, CA (1980, 1984-2013)

*We also wish to thank our dedicated staff:*

Janis Dickinson (*Chief Content Officer & Chair of Risk Management*)  
Tamara Kaup (*Operations Officer, Nebraska Division*)  
Karen Nardi (*General Counsel & Director, Black Rock City Division*)  
Vince Voegeli (*Commander-in-chief, Hastings Central*)  
Kyle Funk (*Intern, Special Operations*)