
THE CALIFORNIA ACORN REPORT

Volume 15

The Official Newsletter of the California Acorn Survey 19 October 2011
Walt Koenig and Jean Knops, co-directors

Editor: Walt Koenig

CONTINENTAL DRIFTERS

Welcome to this year's *California Acorn Report*, compiled from the 283 tweets sent hourly to my many, many (well, actually only 3) twitter fans scattered across the country (to wit [twit?]: Janis, Dale, and Phoebe) during the acorn-counting season, which was by all measures one for the record books. It started at 1 pm on 12 August when I packed myself, along with a trunkful of random boxes and our evil dog Beezel, into our Ithaca, NY Corolla and drove off on what promised to be the Summer Adventure of a Lifetime. And indeed, it was all that and more. To read about the nuances of each and every freeway rest stop, doggie poop bag, and hairball we experienced together over the next 18 days before finally arriving at Hastings, just friend Beezel at her ever-popular Facebook page (her email address: beelzebub@satansminions.org).

Here, however, you'll be grateful to learn that I will spare you most of the details of the trip while focusing on a few of the more notable hosts and diversions along the way. (In case I forget someone, be assured that we experienced absolutely no *un*-notable hosts--you were all fabulous. Except that none of you volunteered to take Beezel off our hands. Maybe on our way back next summer? Please? Pretty please? With a dog biscuit on top?)



Enjoying a barbeque on the deck in Meadville the first night of our cross-country extravaganza. From the left: Sarah, Beezel, Ron, friend Jennifer, and F1 Rachel, aka baby Rhodo, who, like most of our cohort's kids, is pretty much grown up and everything. So much so that I think she needs a dog, don't you?

First was a stop at Ron and Sarah's in Meadville, Pennsylvania, home of both Meadville College, where Ron teaches, and (more famously) the Carp from Hell, the congregation of fish along the spillway of Pymatuning Reservoir that have been headlining the nightmares of local children since it was completed in the 1930s. But time was short—there was only 17 days to get all the way across the country—so Beezel and I decided to skip the carp (or was it skip the crap? No...Beezel never does that...) this time around and instead continued on the next morning.

MANGLE THAT BIKE

My destination was Milwaukee to see my brother (the famous now-retired actuary), which I realize is peripheral to the *California Acorn Report*, albeit not much more so than anything else I put in here. I did, however, have one notable adventure along the way that's worth reporting. I got to Chicago fairly late in the day and instead of dealing with traffic on the freeway got off and started driving through the streets. While on a one-way section of Spaulding Ave.—as it happens one of the streets my father lived on at one point—I went over a large speed bump, which seemed to disrupt the car more than the normal amount. Looking back and seeing that Beezel was (unfortunately) still there, I continued on a couple of blocks before noticing that people were gesticulating and apparently trying to inform me of something critical. I naturally assumed they had noticed the “California Acorn Survey, Official Vehicle” sign and were cheering me on, but then looked back only to notice that the bicycle rack containing both my (beater) bike and Janis's (much nicer) bike didn't seem to be attached to the trunk where I'd left it. Horrors! Apparently it had fallen off the back and was sitting in the middle of the road two blocks back where the speed bump had been!

I couldn't turn around and go back, so I waved to the guy who had been yelling at me (“yes! the bikes! I see!”), jumped back in the car, and sped off around the corner. It wasn't until I'd turned one more corner, gone back the two blocks, and turned the next corner that I looked in the rear-view mirror and discovered that the bikes and the rack weren't in the middle of the street ahead of me, they were being dragged behind me. At that point I finally stopped, disattached everything from the car and from

each other, and reattached the rack and the bicycles to the trunk, trying not to notice Janis's mangled handlebars and derailleur. Both ended up being fixable, but it was several weeks before I could get the guy out of my head who had tried to tell me about the bikes only to have me jump back into the car and drive off, continuing to drag them behind me. He's probably still shaking his head in disbelief.

MIDWESTERN INTERLUDE

After recovering for a day in Milwaukee and checking the bike-rack for the 53rd time, I continued on to Minnesota. First stop there was St. Paul, where I dumped Beezel with Laurie and Cate (Janis's sister and sister-in-law), and then went on to Cedar Creek, where I met Jean for the Minnesota Division of the 2011 Acorn Counting Marathon.



Aunties Cate and Laurie reluctantly restrain their dog Jester from eating Beezel for dinner shortly after the latter took a crap on their spanking-new backyard brick walkway. Yup; Beez sure knows how to charm the relatives.

We think this is the 16th year for the Cedar Creek acorn count, but we aren't sure since in order to check we'd have

to spend at least 30 seconds looking up the data file and my goodness, do you think we have all day to fart around or something? (If we did, we'd be twittering at 15 minute, rather than one hour, intervals). The real problem, as I've complained in the past, is that we now do the survey before all the bur oak acorns have fallen, which is most unfortunately prior to the opening of the Minnesota State Fair, whereas in the old days we were able to count (only the few acorns that remained, admittedly) and then drown ourselves in minidonuts and deep-fried Snickers bars, which somehow seemed a lot more satisfying.

Nonetheless, we continue to carry on, having been unsuccessful thus far at getting one of our junior colleagues (Kyle? are you listening? We're talking to you, Kyle) to write up the Cedar Creek data. And perhaps it will be worth it after all someday, even sans minidonuts. Regardless, this year was certainly an interesting one, with the bur oaks having the best crop ever and pin oaks producing their usual (relatively constant) number of acorns. We also had the joy of experiencing the malfunctioning, inter-connected fire alarms of the new dorm building, which first went off somewhere around 4

am and continued to explode every half hour despite my concerted attempts to dismantle as many of them as I could. Admittedly, if there were a fire, they would do a fine job of getting you out of bed. The trick is to try and get some sleep in the meantime.



Jean, lost in a sea of grass nurtured by the wet summer, counting acorns at Cedar Creek.

With phase one of the acorn counting season out of the way, I left Cedar Creek in a car that was orderly and peaceful. Oh right—Beezel. I knew I was forgetting something. Not wishing to incur the wrath of my Twitter fans, I picked her up, said goodbye to Laurie and Cate, and went south to Iowa City, where Janis had been visiting her older sister Sandy since shortly after I'd left Ithaca.

Iowa City—the Emerald City! How often I'd watched the flying monkeys heading that direction and dreamed of visiting its fabled soybeans and corn palaces! We had a nice visit not only with Sandy and Paul but with their goth son Matt, his wife Jen, and their two adorable kids. The highlight, however, was on our way out of town, when Sandy and Paul led us to what was an excellent taco stand on the outskirts of the metropolis for lunch. Its good food and authenticity provided hope that the geographic distribution of taco trucks will continue to expand eastward and eventually include Ithaca, hopefully sooner rather than later. A silver lining of global warming, perhaps?

With not only Beezel in tow but Janis in the passenger's seat, we headed west. Once again, we would both like to acknowledge the excellent and generous hospitality of our friends and relatives who put up with us along the way with food, housing, drugs, alcohol, and more. This included Jean and Tammy in Lincoln, Lauren and Bill in Fort Collins, Jason and Amy in Denver, Keith and Amy in Tucson, and, last but not least, Ron and Kathy in Tempe. We also had the opportunity to spend several days in Telluride and Santa Fe with our now collegiate Phoebe (who, fortunately, was willing to sit on Beezel's lab in the Corolla after we picked her up at the airport in Denver) and a day in Albuquerque with Dale, now a certified

college graduate, who is currently working there as a clerk in the DOE. At least that's what we're supposed to tell everyone. Presumably he's actually working on some top-secret remote-sensing acorn-counting project at Sandia Laboratories, although the details are murky. Regardless, we're proud of them both and grateful to have had the opportunity to spend time with them before Phoebe flew back to Reed where she's now a sophomore and Dale went back to work at his Sandia Lab to see what's on the slab.

CONTINENTAL DRIFTERS: A PHOTO ESSAY



One of the main reasons it took 18 days to drive from Ithaca to California is that Beezel was constantly insisting we stop and read to her. Here at Sandy and Paul's in Iowa City, Walt reads Beezel her favorite book ('The Adventures of Rin-tin-tin'), while Janis checks to make sure I don't leave anything out.



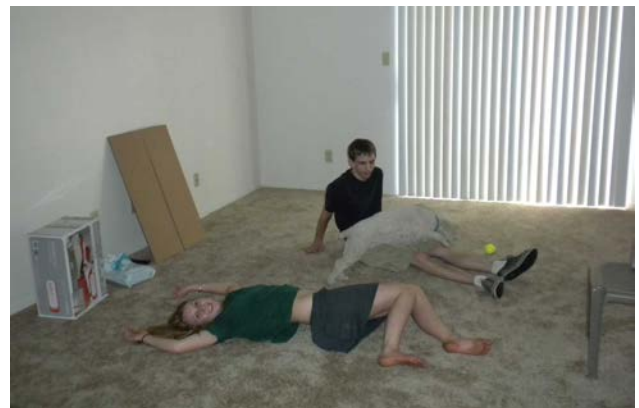
With a taco truck worthy of the most run-down Central Valley outpost of the California Acorn Survey, Iowa City proved itself a Midwestern culinary miracle. Here Janis, her grandnephew Felix, her sister Sandy, and her brother-in-law Paul await lunch at La Michoacana while Beezel and I (not shown) try to talk the owner into abandoning his spot at the edge of Iowa City and spending winters in lovely Ithaca, New York—a part of the country that's sorely in need of a few of these.



The girls in Denver. In the background: Janis and Amy (one of my neices-in-law). In the foreground: Phoebe holds Beezel while the latter is petted by Jason and Amy's daughters Sophia and Callie. They sure look like they need a dog, don't you think?



Janis, Phoebe, and Beezel pause on one of our hikes in the mountains above Telluride, Colorado. Somehow, even here—and I assure you that Telluride is in one of the more obscure parts of the Rockies—Phoebe managed to find some fellow Reedies to hang out with in the evening while Janis and I were stuck back in the hotel reading to the dog, as usual. Really? The 'Adventures of Rin-tin-tin'? Again??



Phoebe and Dale playing with Beezel in Dale's lushly-appointed apartment in Albuquerque. We had one day together before Phoebe flew back to college during which we took the Sandia Peak Tramway and had a fabulous dinner at one of Phoebe's Yelp finds. Dale clearly has the look of a kid who needs a dog, don't you agree?



Beezel pretending she's a chile pepper at Sparky's Burgers and Barbeque in Hatch, NM, Repeat after me, Beez: you're a dog. D.O.G. Not a pepper. A rutebega maybe, but NOT a pepper.



The Brusts—including Keith, our very own Emmy award-winning cinematographer who we got to know when he filmed an infomercial on acorn woodpeckers at Hastings some years ago—his wife Amy, who does good works for a living, and their kids Jiaying (with Beezel) and Colin, in their fabulous Tucson home where we had pizza on Sunday, 28 August on our last night out of California. Beez really liked it there, and the kids sure seemed like they needed a pet. Keith? Are you still there?

The Goddess of Frolic herself romps free at Carmel Beach after finally making it to the West Coast. Go ahead and jump in Beez—Hawaii's close, I promise...



With one last stop in the San Fernando Valley to see my stepfather Keith, we at long last rolled into Hastings at 7:50 pm on 30 August, a mere 18 days and 4,726 miles after leaving Ithaca. I've heard rumors that there are more direct routes between Ithaca and Carmel Valley. Maybe next time we'll look it up on Google Maps beforehand.

HASTINGS: THE AUTUMN OF PROGRESS

Changes are afoot at Hastings. Most disturbingly, Eric, my woodpecker postdoc, got a job at Old Dominion University (fondly known to us all as 'Old Dipshit U', although I'll try to refrain from calling it this as he gets closer to going up for tenure) in Norfolk, VA, and moved out shortly after we left in July after 5 years of dedicated service to the cause of woodpeckerdom. Most fortunately, at least for those of us who are thinking we might not want to be spending a high proportion of our time climbing trees forever, he's planning to continue working on the project and will be returning early next year for the 2012 breeding season. In the meantime, however, the reserve was uncharacteristically quiet with the only person around besides Mark (the Manager) and Jaime (our dedicated Reserve Steward) being Katie, our woodpecker field assistant from Gonzaga.

But that's not all. After 29 years, we finally cleared out the beloved School House and moved, admittedly somewhat begrudgingly, up to the Hastings Cabin, at least until we realized that it's actually really nice up there, with a great view and, even better, its very own group of acorn woodpeckers to wake up to every morning out on the wonderful sleeping porch.

Meanwhile, Mark Stromberg, who's managed the reserve since 1988, will be retiring this fall. Mark has overseen a vast number of improvements to Hastings over the years, including revamping most of the buildings, and is heading with his wife Barb to a home out in the wilds of Sonoita, Arizona, where they plan to make a small retirement income selling lemonade to the Mexicans migrating north through their property after dark. We wish them the best.

Janis in the School House living room on 21 July. We finished moving everything just in time to fly back to Ithaca and clear the house there out so we could drive out to California and move all our stuff to our sabbatical apartment in Palo Alto. Note the floor in the middle that, because it's been covered by a rug for the last 29 years, is still shiny from my summer 1982 refinishing job.



AND WHAT ABOUT THE ACORN CROP?

Let's talk acorns! It at least gives me a chance to stop trying to give away the dog for a while. Janis, Beezel, and I finally made it back to Hastings on 30 August, at which point we moved into the Hastings Cabin and got prepared for the acorn-counting season that was finally upon us. First up was meeting Bill Carmen at Jasper Ridge on 7 September for the 23rd year of the count there. Anticipation was high as we had our first glimpse of what the year's acorn crop was likely to be. Of course, first we had to get in the gate, which usually isn't a problem except that Bill wasn't sure where his keycard was and I thought I'd lost mine. Interestingly, it turned out that the white card in my wallet that I'd thought was my key to the Lab of Ornithology building in Ithaca all last winter was actually my Jasper Ridge keycard. So we were off!

It took a while, since we kept inadvertently skipping trees and had to backtrack several times. But eventually, 5 hours later, we completed the survey with the answer in hand. Which was...?

That there ARE acorns out there. In fact, sometimes there are lots of acorns. Then again, sometimes there aren't. If Jasper Ridge was any indication of what was to come, there would be acorns, but they would be spotty. In other words, it was one of those intermediate years which, by a remarkable coincidence, is what most of them are, more or less.

The Jasper Ridge acorn survey in 1989 (right, with Mark Stanback, who helped set it up) and in 2011 (below, with Bill Carmen, the official bartender of the California Acorn Survey). Bill



has unfailingly helped with the survey since 1981 with the exception of 1989, when he was a postdoc in Maryland, 1993, when he was apparently busy perfecting his gin-and- tonic mixing techniques, and 1999, when aliens were experimenting on his knees.



Specifically, we counted an average of 14.1 acorns per valley oak, 7.4 acorns per blue oak, and 13.8 acorns per coast live oak, putting 2011 as 8th (valley oak), 10th (blue oak), and 14th (coast live oak) out of the 23 years we've done the survey at Jasper Ridge. It doesn't usually get more middling than that.

After completing Jasper Ridge and having dinner with Robert and Tania (old friends from college) in Los Altos I went to San Jose and picked up Kyle and Tom, who had generously agreed to spend a week before starting grad school (Tom) and in the middle of TAing (Kyle) to come out and finish the valley oak flower survey left incomplete because my former postdoc, who will remain unnamed, had the audacity to get a job (and probably a haircut as well). The nerve! In any case, I give both Kyle and Tom my heartfelt thanks; without them, I would have had to contemplate doing the work myself.

Flying in the next day was Jean, who took the Airbus to Monterey, followed by Bill, who drove down from Mill Valley. For the next several days Tom and Kyle, aided by Katie, our fearless acorn woodpecker assistant from Gonzaga, climbed up ladders to look at branches to discern the fate of flowers while quantifying herbivory while Jean, Bill, and I conducted the Hastings acorn survey and Janis (assisted by Beezel) fixed up our old kitchen table from the School House that she'd turned into a family heirloom some years ago.



Left: Beezel admires the mountain king snake on Janis's fabulous hand-painted table that she renovated while we were off counting acorns.

Below: Party time at Formalin Acres Dos, one of the new modulars that have replaced Red House. From the left: Jean, Katie, Janis, Bill (with Beezel), Tom, and Kyle. Not pictured: the large vat of Bill's gin-and-tonics, which we were eagerly looking

forward to until Beezel tried to take a bath in it.



THE (ACORN) PLOT THICKENS

The Hastings acorn survey (AKA ‘the Mother of all Acorn Surveys’) took place Friday, Saturday, and Sunday while Kyle, Tom, and Katie were busy climbing the valley oaks. For those of you who are keeping track, this was year 32 of the Hastings survey. Yes, you heard that right: 32. You didn’t think we were that old, did you? (OK; maybe you did.) During that time we’ve counted a total of 307,836 acorns, in case you were wondering. This year we counted 15,454, which makes it better than average; in fact, this is the 5th-most acorns we’ve counted at Hastings, so all in all, it’s a pretty good year.

Monday is the traditional day to start the statewide survey, but instead, I spent the day in a U-Haul truck moving our ex-School House furniture to Stanford, where Janis and I are spending the fall and part of the winter while Janis is on sabbatical. We’re particularly indebted to Charles, our #2 woodpecker assistant, who showed up in time to load, and Kyle, who accompanied me in the truck and helped move everything up three flights of stairs to our Stanford West apartment in Palo Alto. After dropping off the truck we had dinner at yet another excellent taqueria, this one in Los Altos recommended by Tania. Then it was a trip to SFO to drop off Kyle who was TAing the next day, and (for me, at any rate) the long drive back to Hastings in Janis’s field vehicle.

The statewide survey, now in its 18th year, followed the historically important ‘Avenida de las bellotas’, the route established by the Spanish Padres back in the 18th century during their groundbreaking, but tragically unsuccessful, attempts to train the Native Americans to count California’s acorns. As has become standard, we stayed primarily at field stations including Hopland, Dye Creek, the James Reserve, and Sedgwick. Our favorite place to stay in Davis, *Chez Brad et Louise*, was most unfortunately closed for the season, so we stayed at Sierra Foothills instead. The housing at San Joaquin Experiment Station was being fixed up, so instead Kathy Purcell graciously fed us dinner and put us up at her fabulous straw-bale house in the hills overlooking highway 41 above Fresno. We did not, for once, stay in the exotic Lake Elsinore Hot Springs Resort; this had nothing to do with its Yelp recommendations (my favorite: ‘Stay away from it. Rooms were disgusting’), but rather because Jean wasn’t keen on driving late into the night to get there.



Day 1: Tower #2 of the Golden Gate Bridge emerges from the fog on the way to Hopland.



Day 2: Tower House in Shasta County. Jean gets the data sheets in order while Laura Christman, a reporter from the

Redding Searchlight, begins to wonder what sort of crazies we really are. In case you’re wondering what she decided, her article is at http://www.redding.com/news/2011/sep/23/acorn_count/

Day 4: Pressure starts to show on Jean’s face as we have lunch at the Ahwahnee in Yosemite. Put the knife down, Jean, slowly please...



Put the knife down, Jean, slowly please...



Day 5: Kathy in front of her amazing solar-powered straw-bale house north of Fresno. I assume the cars run on acorn oil...?

Day 6: Walt with an acorn in front of the Acorn Gallery & Gift Shop next to the Aroma Café in Idyllwild where we had dinner on the way to the James Reserve in the San Jacintos.



Day 7: Badly burned in the 2009 Station Fire and inaccessible since 2009, we were finally able to get back to Switzers in the San Gabriel Mountains. All but one of our trees were fine, surprisingly.



In general, however, it was yet another successful year: we drove, we drove some more, we listened to lots of bad daytime radio, and occasionally we even had a chance to count acorns. Oh, and lest I forget, we ate:

THE RESTAURANT REVIEW

There are two big differences from the early days when Jean and I ate at some of the most pathetic roadhouses one can imagine. The first is, of course, *tacos*. The existence of taquerias serving interesting, authentic, Mexican food throughout much of the west (as far east as Iowa City!) now provides a source of cheap, fast food that makes looping around California a lot more pleasant than it was when we started in 1994. The second difference is Yelp, which now provides a means of avoiding the truly dismal places and instead going to restaurants that people—some people at least—actually like. Phoebe is the master of this, finding the best place to eat cupcakes in New York City, biscuits and gravy in Portland, Thai food in Telluride, and more. But even Jean and I now have a means of eschewing places likely to serve us instant mash potatoes, petrified vegetables, overfried fish, and the other disgusting food-like substances we endured for years. Yelp may be one of the most valuable advances of modern civilization afforded by smart phones, next to the hyperspectral imaging app that provides instant and automatic updates on the size of the acorn crop. The bottom line is that we now generally end up eating in pretty nice, if not great, places. I'll discuss three.

Taqueria Delicia's 2. (130 E. Lake St., Watsonville) Day 1 of the survey involved driving from Hastings to our new tanoak site near the UCSC campus and then on to Hopland. For lunch, however, we found ourselves not quite in Santa Cruz, and consequently I unhesitatingly pointed us to **El Jalisciense III** (300 E. Lake St., Watsonville), the fabulous taqueria where we've been eating ever since Dale and I discovered it during a lull in some band activity he was involved in as a junior at Carmel High. Jean and I walked around to the front only to find two ladies trying to put the metal door, which had somehow fallen off, back on the building. They weren't having much success, so I helped, after which they conveyed in their broken English that they weren't open. It turns out that the place is "under new ownership", which at least today apparently meant they don't serve food anymore. Recovering from this tragedy, we drove down Lake Street and stopped at Taqueria Delicia's 2, which was all of about 2 blocks away. It was a hopping place, full of students from the nearby high school as well as a good number of locals. Like many such taquerias, it's in an old fast food building the demise of which is mourned by noone. They had the usual Mexican fare, but apparently specialize in shrimp cocktails, which everyone seemed to realize were worth ordering except us. In any case, Jean had several tacos and I had a chile relleno with

rice and beans, all of which were excellent. Delicia's 2 provides an excuse to stop in Watsonville even if El Jalisciense never recovers from its makeover. **Rating: 3 tacos.**

Moonstone Bistro (3425 Placer St; Suite 110, Redding, CA) Long-time readers of the *California Acorn Report* are well aware of the pain and suffering we have endured trying to find places to eat in Redding. Admittedly, Maritime Seafood and Grill on California Street is good, but we've been there several times and were hoping for something even better. We put this question to Laura, the investigative reporter who met us at Tower House to look into allegations of international acorn laundering, and she suggested Moonstone.

It turned out to be a small but open place with lovely track lighting next to a Starbucks. They seated us at a booth, only to discover that the benches were bizarrely close to the table and strikingly uncomfortable. Fortunately, they then cheerfully relocated us to a table, after which we started investigating the menu. The one item that stood out was the "cakeage fee" (\$1.50 pp). Thinking it was a typo, we asked the waitress and were told no, lots of people bring their own cakes. No kidding?

Having brought along no cakes ourselves, Jean ordered a tuna-mushroom pasta dish while I had the bacon and black-eyed pea soup along with a crispy calamari hors d'oeuvre. Jean's came garnished with home-made potato chips, which was kind of cool, but was too cheesy (as in too much cheese), while my soup and calamari were interesting but not particularly memorable. We agreed in the end that the ambiance was very nice, but that the food at Maritime is better. **Rating: 2.5 acorns.**

Pier 46 (1131 Rossi Road, Templeton). Jean has apparently been watching lots of old Jacques Cousteau shows with Christopher, his 13-year-old stepson, so he steered us toward several seafood restaurants during the survey. All were OK, but Pier 46, on the west side of the Vineyard Drive exit off 101 in Templeton, was definitely the surprise standout. First off, it's a real fish market that serves food, not a restaurant with a token fish cooler. It's gratifyingly informal (a definite plus if, like us, you tend to show up after a long day of counting acorns) with no waiters (one orders at the register) and only a few tables (5 inside, along with several outside). And, more importantly, the food was really good. I got the crab cakes, which came on a bed of greens with (perhaps not quite enough) spicy sauce and was a bargain at \$12. Jean got the Ahi tacos, which consisted of crispy wonton shells filled with Asian slaw and lots of raw chopped Ahi, and a half-dozen oysters on the half-shell—often the deal-breaker at places that are only pretending to serve real seafood. But they were lovely—Beau Soleil oysters from New Brunswick—enough so that he ordered another dozen for desert. All in all, this place is everything that we kept hoping Buz's Crab Shack in Redding would be but isn't. **Rating: 3.5 oysters.**

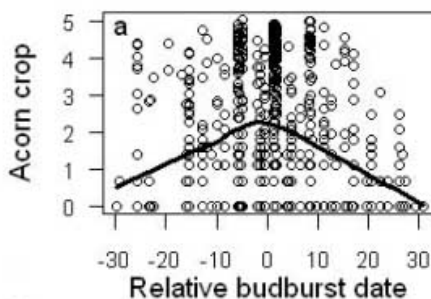
PUBLISH OR PERISH DEPARTMENT

First off, I know all of you have been waiting to hear whether we successfully predicted the MERVAL stock index based on the Hastings black oak acorn crop—the only significant correlation we were able to come up with last year between acorns crops of any of five species at Hastings and anything that might be able to support *The California Acorn Survey* in the style to which we would like to grow accustomed. Our prediction (*California Acorn Report* 14: 6) was that the index would rise 36.9%. As it happens, between 14 Oct. 2010 and 12 Oct. 2011, the MERVAL index went from 2730.6 to 2539.1, a decline of 11%. Maybe we'll keep our day jobs after all, at least for the time being.

Back to papers. First was one reporting on Dick Sage's valley oaks that he planted at Sedgwick in 1997; in short, larger acorns result in larger seedlings with lower survivorship than smaller acorns (*Annals of Forest Science* 68: 477-484 [2011]). Our good friend and colleague Mary Ashley spearheaded molecular work demonstrating that a high proportion of pollen fertilizing acorns in the Hastings valley oaks comes from trees more than 200 m away, contrasting with previously results of Victoria Sork's group from Sedgwick (*International Journal of Plant Sciences* 172: 691-699 [2011]). Finally, we have a paper showing that phenology in the Hastings valley oaks has important effects on acorn production that we hope will be in press soon, at least if the *Journal of Ecology* gets off their English rear-ends and accepts the paper. Specifically, trees that leaf out in the middle of the season are more productive than trees leafing out either early or late in the season (see figure below), a result that supports the hypothesis that pollen limitation is important to within-year productivity.

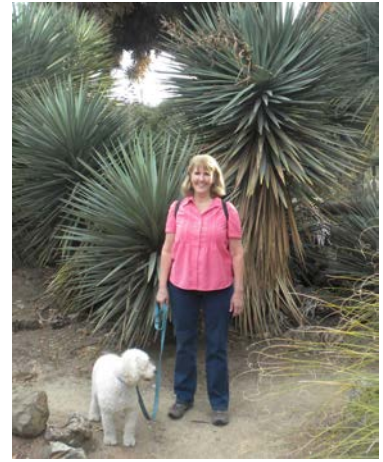
Perhaps more exciting than the papers was an invitation to the Ecological Society of Japan meeting in Sapporo last March to talk about acorns, which turned out to be a wonderful trip both in terms of getting to know several amazing colleagues (hi to Elizabeth, Akiko, and Yuko!) but also because the trip turned out to coincide with one of the best earthquake/tsunami seasons Japan has had in decades, if not centuries. Sapporo was fine, but we at the *California Acorn Survey* wish to offer our best to everyone there who wasn't so fortunate.

This year's nominal data figure: budburst date of valley oaks at Hastings between 2003 and 2010 (standardized to the mean for each year)



against the (log-transformed) acorn crop counted in the fall during the annual survey.

Janis takes Beezel for a walk in the Stanford arboretum. So far being in the Bay Area for Janis's sabbatical has given us the chance to go to a poetry festival in Berkeley, the Mill Valley Film festival, have several great dinners with our old friends Robert and Tania, and pretend like we're serious bike-riders, even if our bikes have barely recovered from their attempted escape in Chicago.



WRAP-UP AND FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

And that's it for this year's *California Acorn Report*. We gratefully acknowledge support from the National Science Foundation, the official science foundation of the *California Acorn Survey*. Despite being in California much of this year, our noncorporate offices remain:

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

Ron Mumme, Meadville, PA (1980-83, ex-officio 2009-)

Mark Stanback, Davidson, NC (1989-90, 1992)

Elizabeth Ross-Hooge, Mt. McKinley, AK (1991)

Jay McEntee, Berkeley, CA (2005)

Xiaoan Zuo & Wenjin Li, Lanzhou, China (2010)

Eric Walters, Norfolk, VA/Jamesburg, CA (2006-2010)

Bill Carmen, Mill Valley, CA (1981-88, 90-92, 94-98, 2000-11)

Jean Knops, Lincoln, NE (1993-2011)

Walt Koenig, Ithaca, NY/Jamesburg, CA (1980, 1984-2011)

For heaven's sake, cheer up! The Angel of Grief, in the arboretum a short walk from our apartment, laments her failure to receive a copy of this year's California Acorn Report. There's always next year, kiddo. In the meantime, you can download a pdf at <http://www.californiaacornsurvey.org/>

