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Orinda Garden Club members assemble wreaths prior to distribution.

Orinda Garden Club coordinates annual holiday wreath hanging

By Sora O'Doherty

For the ninth year in a row, the Orinda Garden Club assembled holiday wreaths and hung them in numerous locations around Orinda to brighten up the town. Garden club members Shelley Gilligan and

Margene Stahle chaired the project. A dozen volunteers worked to decorate and hang the wreaths, observing all COVID-19 precautions. In the past, Boy Scout Troop 237 has assisted with the event, but took a break this year owing to the pandemic. Cathleen Sodos and Jane Wisner were the first chairs of the wreath committee, and they hang a cer-

emonial wreath each year at Lake Cascade. The wreaths can be found at the Library Plaza, the Community Center, on the Orinda sign at the intersection of Camino Pablo and Camino Sobrante, on the historic bridge at the end of Orinda Way. It might be subtle, but look for the wreath on the historic Orinda sign in front of the community center.



Photo provided

Photo Sora O'Doherty

Advertising



Letters to the Editor	A9
How to contact us	B4
Community Service	B3
Obituaries	B3
Classified	C1
Shop Orinda	C2

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Lamorinda attack coyote a repeat offender, still at large

By Nick Marnell

Officials from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife confirmed that the coyote responsible for two attacks in Moraga and one in Lafayette is the exact same coyote.

Forensic scientists from Fish and Wildlife, through a DNA analysis, found that the DNA profile of the coyote in all three incidents was a match, according to Capt. Patrick Foy of the department's law enforcement division.

A coyote attacked and bit a young boy July 9 at the Moraga Commons, and the child's nanny hit the animal with a bike helmet to drive it away. The boy has fully recovered.

On Dec. 4, wildlife officers responded to a call of a man bitten in the leg by a coyote early in the morning at the Campolindo High School athletic field, less than two miles from the Commons. The man attacked, Moraga resident Kenji Sytz, said he was working out with his friends along the running track when he felt a sharp pain in his left calf.

"It ended up being a significant wound," said Sytz, who was treated at Kaiser Walnut Creek and released that day. "What was even tougher was the series of rabies shots I had to get." Sytz's treatment concluded in mid-December.

Officers collected the pants Sytz wore as evidence and rushed them to the Wildlife Forensics Laboratory in Sacramento. Foy said that scientists isolated a full

coyote DNA profile from the spot where the animal's teeth went through the pants and ultimately into Sytz's skin.

Fish and Wildlife officials said that the DNA profile of the coyote that bit a store employee behind Diablo Foods in Lafayette the evening of Dec. 15 matched the profile of the coyote responsible for the two Moraga attacks. The fugitive coyote remains on the loose, with Fish and Wildlife, allied agencies and community partners continuing to search the area for the animal.

"People tend to oversimplify the capture process," Foy said. "The most difficult animal to catch is a coyote, which has adapted very well to living alongside humans. We can't just discharge a firearm in a public area." When officials eventually find the animal, Foy said it will be put down.

The attack investigations brought to light other aggressive coyote reports in the Lamorinda area where the animals approached people and their pets, including a sighting near the Moraga Starbucks in the Rheem Shopping Center.

Foy suggested that residents refer to keep-mewild.org to learn ways to better coexist with coyotes and other wildlife. "Tips offered there are the most important ways individuals can help make progress in our statewide effort to live alongside wildlife," he said.

"Getting bit by a coyote was a crazy experience, and I'm glad it was me and not another child who got attacked," Sytz said. He advocates the use of good judgment and caution around all wildlife, but he asks

that the community not rush to judgment based on the actions of "one sick animal."

"I hope that people in our community do not start to fear coyotes," Sytz said.



Illustration Jaya Griggs

Civic News A1-A10	Life in Lamorinda B1-B4	Sports C1-C2	Our Homes D1-D16
Design changes made to Lafayette's Terraces Development project – Page A2	Local conservationist recognized for lifelong efforts - Page B1	Oakland Strokes finds way to row through the pandemic - Page C1	Hoe, hoe, hoe through the holidays as we stay safe at home - Page D1
Fire Districts A8			
ConFire will no longer declare an end to fire season - Page A8			