

The New Year News

Monterey Bay, California

3 January 2016

*All the leaves are brown
And the sky is gray.
I've been for a walk
On a winter's day ...*

California Dreamin'
The Mamas and the Pappas
1965

Marina State Beach and its 100-foot tall dunes with the Monterey Peninsula in the background, marking the southern boundary of Monterey Bay. All the pictures in this newsletter were shot on a drive around the edge of the bay, which is a 20-mile wide bite out of the California coast southwest of San Jose. The bay's waters are more than two miles deep and normally filled by cold water that flows south from Alaska. That means many of the creatures that live in it – seals and sea lions, salmon, sea otters, several species of whales and the occasional orca – are shared with Alaska, too.

And the sky is gray



New Year's surfers at Marina State Beach on Monterey Bay

It took the impact of an extraordinary *El Niño* to bring ordinary winter weather back to California.

There is snow again in the Sierra, which you saw in last weekend's holiday newsletter, and gray skies on the coast, which is where I like to shoot pictures for the New Year's newsletter.

Yet when extraordinary events are required to produce normal results, unexpected consequences often follow.

- Continued in two pages

And the sky is gray



A California gull in winter plumage perches on a rock in Andy Jacobson Park, a stretch of seashore in the Monterey Peninsula town of Pacific Grove.



And the sky is gray

– Continued from two pages previous
Dungeness crab, a winter delicacy along our part of the coast – especially on Christmas tables – has been infected by a warm-water algae that *El Niño* brought northward.

The crabs aren't bothered by the algae but people who eat them and some other shellfish are. The start of crab season in mid-November was delayed indefinitely and likely there will be no crab at all this winter.

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The *Dreamcatcher* and its crab pots will likely remain docked at Moss Landing all winter.

And the sky is gray

Continued from previous page

The crab feed that the men's group at our church puts on as a fund-raiser will have even more pasta next month than normal.

These are facts, not a complaint. Crab isn't essential to human survival; water and the snow that brings it to California is.

And the new year promises plenty of it. Not enough to declare our four-year drought over. Just enough to say precip-wisely, we should be normal.

Which is a good start.

The Point Pinos lighthouse in Pacific Grove, which was commissioned in 1855, is the oldest active lighthouse on the West Coast. The U.S. flag here has only 31 stars, which it had from 1851-1858. The next state to enter the Union would be Minnesota.

Happy New Year



A family enjoys the new year on the beach at Capitola.