

PARK > Record winter storm expected to drop several inches and blow like a hurricane. /6

POINT REYES > Mushrooms draw hords in slickers for annual count in the seashore. /12

LETTERS > Deer advocates challenge environmentalists' stance on park plan. /5

CALENDAR > Columbian film is among Oscar nominees that will show at the Rafael. /20



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by Justin Nobel

Muir Woods National Monument, a lush glen of old-growth redwoods on the slopes of Mount Tamalpais, will celebrate its 100th anniversary on Wednesday. The woods have provided an arboreal Eden for millions of visitors, including U.N. delegations, Bay Area school kids and tourists from all corners of the globe.

One hundred years ago, William Kent, a British sea captain and avid hunter, donated to the federal government a 295-acre belt of old-growth redwood forest. The remote trees had never been felled mostly because logging them had been too difficult. President Theodore

Please turn to page 8

The Point Reyes Light wishes the people of West Marin a happy new year. May you have good luck and be blessed with loving relations, health and meaningful work. Photo by Justin Nobel.

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by Jacoba Charles

Shoppers throughout the county spent less money than usual during the holiday season, but in West Marin most business owners were happy with their returns. The sun shone, restaurants bustled, and both locals and tourists came out in droves.

"The area seemed to do really well," said Julie Garagliano with the West Marin

Please turn to page 7

OPINION /4

Park Service has dug a hole in the data

GUEST REVIEW /5

New art arouses censure, even in arty Bolinas

ASK MISSY /10

Do you remember the Inverness flood of '82?

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by Justin Nobel

On New Years Eve, three dozen bare-foot revelers grooved to the music of Nicholas Giacomini, a.k.a. MC Yogi, in a lofty San Francisco yoga studio.

"When I say 'jai,' you say 'ganesh,'" shouted Giacomini, who wore black jeans and an Adidas warm up jacket. "When I say 'om gum ganapateya namaha,' you say 'om gum ganapateya namaha.'"

A woman in turquoise yoga pants leapt into the air and kicked her legs like a cheerleader. A man with a shaggy mohawk launched into a back flip. Some break danced. Many chanted. A few did yoga postures.

Most of the party-goers that rang in the new year with Giacomini knew him from Yoga Toes, the studio he runs with his wife Amanda in downtown Point Reyes Station. Few knew that Giacomini could rap, or that it was even possible to rap about yoga. But based on broad local support, and aided by Shanghai producer Sean Dinsmore, Giacomini hopes his playful beats will blast a peaceful cap in the face of the rap world.

Giacomini began practicing yoga at age 18, when his father, Chris, invited

Please turn to page 14

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Extended Sheri 's call /3
» A person walking on Stinson Beach found bones that appeared to be a human's. The long leg bones were taken to the Coroner's office for inspection.

>> Forest

continued from page 1

Roosevelt designated the spot a national monument, the country's tenth, and Kent suggested it be named after conservationist John Muir. Muir Woods National Monument was born.

Since then, not much has changed. Some paths were paved, a new visitor center was built and a new sewage system added. But for the most part, the 300-foot, 1,000-year-old trees remain exactly the way they were a century ago.

For a quarter of that century, Mia Monroe has worked as a ranger at the park, and if there's anyone who can explain why the park is special and where it's headed, it's her. I met Monroe on Monday outside the visitor center. She wore worn leather boots and a straw hat that sat atop wavy brown hair. She spoke passionately and authoritatively as she led me on a short walk in the woods.

We crossed a wooden bridge over a gurgling stream and followed a damp

path under swooping oak branches. The air was cold and moist and filled with the soft, soothing sounds of dripping water and chattering children.

"Everyone who comes to Muir Woods walks away feeling better than when they started," said Monroe. She says the park is special because, unlike other gems in the state, Muir Woods is close to downtown San Francisco, and has paved paths that making walking easy for everyone.

People are drawn to the woods for the woods, says, Monroe, not for any specific thing. "It isn't that tree or that one view or that one spot," she says, "it's simply the guy actually breathing fresh air, being in a place that's ancient and peaceful."

"It's so amazing that just on the other side of the path there's a whole other world," she added. Beyond the simple wood fence that lined the path, ferns so green they glowed brushed the air. Redwoods disappeared in a nest of needles, their towering trunks worn with ridges and ruts like a rumpled landscape on some ancient topographic map. Beneath the trees was a green carpet of redwood sorrel.

Monroe approached a visitor in a grey winter cap who was leaning over the

fence inspecting a patch of bright red mushrooms.

"Coral fungus," she said.

The man digested this information and pegged the ranger with a question: "Find many four-leaf clovers?" he asked in an Irish accent.

Monroe pointed out that the green clover-looking carpet was actually redwood sorrel.

Further on, the path widened at a popular spot for photos, in the nook of a large redwood. A couple stood taking pictures and beside them, a man with a pony tail and orange yoga pants stood in a shaft of light with his hands raised to the sky as if in prayer.

"This is a dark forest," said Monroe, "but people don't feel like it's dark and haunted. It feels friendly."

Monroe said one of the main challenges of the first one hundred years has been how to handle the park's popularity and keep the tremendous numbers of visitors from having too big of an impact. Management efforts have included offering shuttle services to the park to reduce the car traffic on the minor entrance road, installing boardwalks and paved paths on

the most popular hiking paths and introducing "quiet days," the next one of which is to occur Monday. Visitors are asked to refrain from using cell phones and speak in whispers, if they talk at all.

Monroe says that balancing conservation with the forest's popularity will continue to be a challenge for park officials but the next century will bring new issues too, including how to confront global warming and sudden oak death and how to preserve endangered species.

The park will also launch several research projects. Sound technicians will study the noises of the forest and biologists will use modern laser tools to determine the height of the trees, many of which have never been measured before.

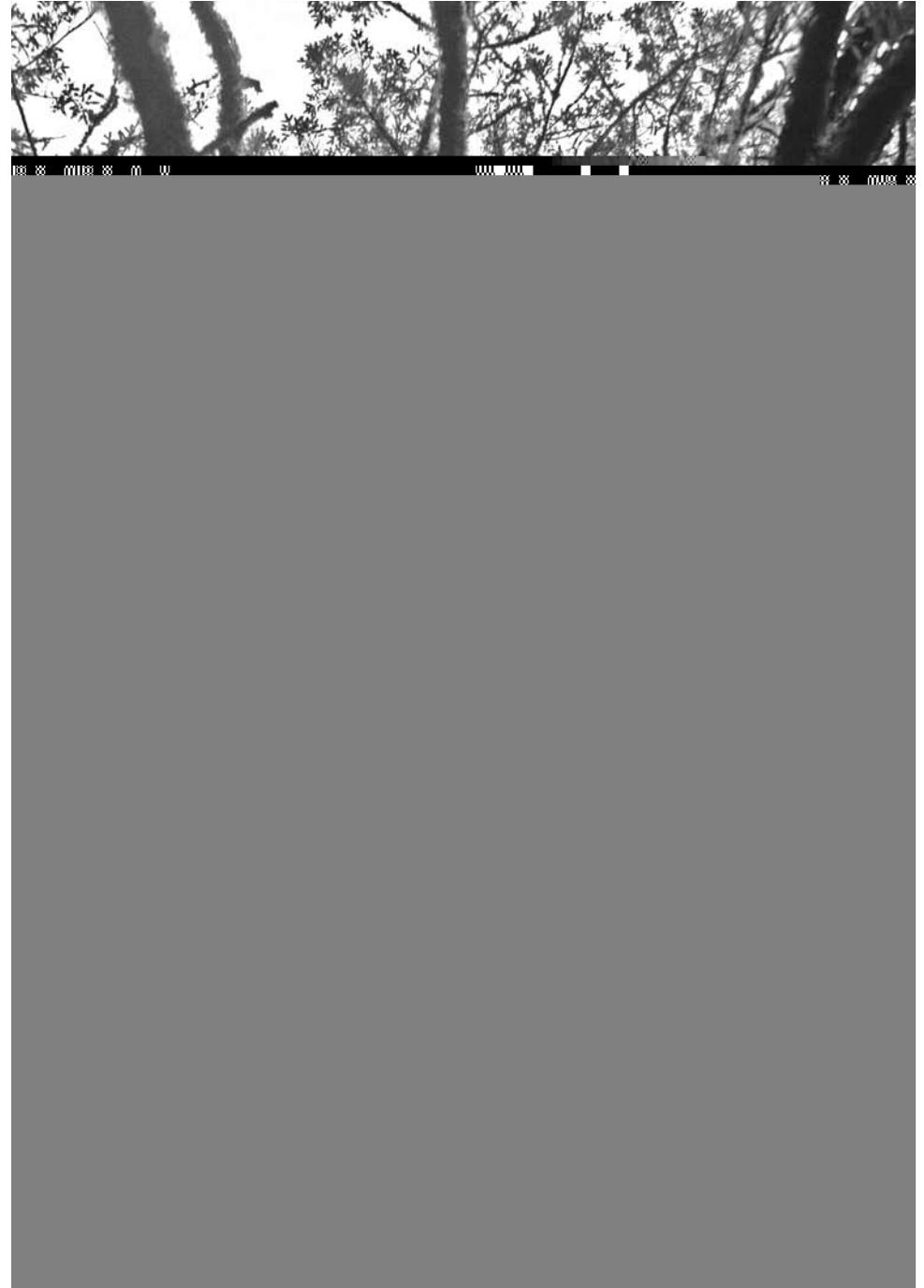
"It makes a really good office," said Monroe, as she marveled at her office-mates, both human and arboreal.

"If I look and listen," she said, "I can almost hear the trees whispering through the ages."

For more information on Muir Woods centennial events go to: <http://www.nps.gov/muwo/planyourvisit/muir-woods-centennial.htm>.



A visitor at Muir Woods National Monument shimmers in a shaft of light.



Muir redwoods top out at 258 feet. Some are 1,200 years old. Photos by JN.