

# Wishing You a Very Merry Christmas!

From the Staff of  
Times Media, Inc.

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## San Jose Dance Theatre announces community guest artists for 60th anniversary 'Chimney Sweep' cameo roles in The Original San José Nutcracker

In celebration of the 60th Anniversary of The Original San José Nutcracker, San Jose Dance Theatre is delighted to introduce a special new tradition: Guest Community Chimney Sweeps, featuring notable local leaders and beloved public figures in cameo appearances throughout Nutcracker weekend.

Traditionally, chimney sweeps have long been considered symbols of good fortune — folklore says that shaking a chimney sweep's hand brings luck for the year ahead. In this milestone production, each guest will bring their own magic, personality, and San José spirit to this whimsical role, honoring both the past and future of this beloved holiday production.

"This is such a joyful way to honor our community while  
*See NUTCRACKER, page 3*



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## HomeFirst hosts 'Beers & Bows' holiday gift-wrapping event

*Supports children who are experiencing homelessness*

By William Bellou  
Publisher

HomeFirst recently hosted Beers & Bows, a community event where volunteers wrap presents for children experiencing homelessness. The event was held at Hapa's Brewing Company in Willow Glen.

"The holidays can be a time of joy and abundance for some, but a challenging time for others," said Annette Pizzo, HomeFirst Director of Community Engagement. "With Beers & Bows, we aim to reduce stress for parents and ensure that all children - despite their families' financial circumstances and housing status - are able to receive a holiday gift and feel the holiday spirit."

HomeAid Northern California generously



Volunteers display some of the presents wrapped for homeless children during HomeFirst's sponsored event Beers & Bows; a volunteer wraps a present ready for delivery to a child experiencing homelessness.



donated enough presents for the approximately 430 children whose families are served through HomeFirst's Santa Clara County-based programs. The gifts include Legos, games, soccer balls, dolls, action figures, art supplies, toy cars, and books. The presents, which are suited to a variety of ages and interests, will be distributed to parents by HomeFirst staff.

### About HomeFirst

HomeFirst is a nonprofit organization work-

ing passionately to end homelessness. We serve the Bay Area community through low-barrier programming (prevention, outreach, shelters, and interim and permanent housing programs) and systems leadership - meeting each person where they are by offering support and resources that address immediate and long-term housing needs. The agency is currently honoring its 45th year of service.

## Local volunteers help birds — and native habitats — thrive

By Michele Dexter  
Special to the Times

Have you ever thought about placing a birdhouse in your yard?

Thanks to a dedicated network of local volunteers, thousands of birds in the Santa Clara Valley have found safe places to nest—and many residents have discovered the joy of watching them.

For 24 years, longtime Almaden Valley volunteer Lee Pauser has been installing and monitoring nest boxes for 18 species of cavity-nesting birds, from Western Bluebirds to American Kestrels and Barn Owls. His careful customization and meticulous record-keeping have helped launch more than 23,000 birds into the world—many from species once



Left: Lee Pauser servicing a barn owl box in 2023. Right: Barn owl with owlets. Photos by Amanda Newlove

depleted by development.

Across 24 nesting seasons, Pauser has documented 7,500 broods containing 36,000 eggs. Of those, 31,000 hatched, and 23,000 nestlings successfully fledged. At his busiest, Pauser monitored 530 nest boxes across city and county parks, golf courses, a community garden, and



even IBM's local campuses.

All this data is reported to Cornell University's NestWatch program and the California Bluebird Recovery Program, where it supports academic research on bird populations.

Pauser hasn't done this alone. Over the years,  
*See BIRDS, page 6*

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Times Local News

Keep deliveries safe this holiday season

By Domingo Candelas

During the holiday season, the surge in shopping, travel, and gatherings can lead to an increase in package theft, mail tampering, and home burglaries. By following these SJPD holiday safety tips using this link: <https://tinyurl.com/589buemf> - you and your family can help keep your home and deliveries secure—and enjoy the holidays with peace of mind.

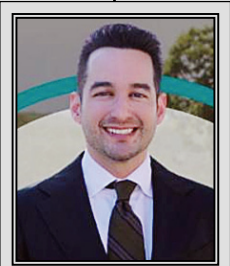
To protect your packages, many neighbors have found success using alternate delivery options like package lockers and in-store pickup. If you are sending out mail,

dropping it off directly at the post office is a safer choice than leaving it in your mailbox.

It's also important to take steps to secure your home, even if you're only going out for a short period of time. Make sure all doors, windows, garages, and outdoor storage areas are locked before you leave your home. Using timer-controlled lights or leaving a car in the driveway can help make your home appear occupied.

And, as always, our neighborhoods are stronger when we look out for one another. So, if you're gone, consider asking a neighbor to grab your mail or keep an eye on your home.

It is my pleasure and privilege to serve as your City Councilmember.



**Council Report**  
Domingo Candelas,  
District 8 Councilmember

Pickleball popularity hits a 300 percent increase

Pickleball has become a very popular sport across America.

With a 311% explosion in participation over 3 years, which U.S. cities are most pickleball-obsessed?

To celebrate the USA Pickleball National Championships from Nov. 15 to 23, the website Lawn Love looks ahead to rank the Best Cities for Pickleball in 2026.

It's not all fun and games — there's real money on the line for professional players. Major League Pickleball (MLP) and the Professional Pickleball Association (PPA) collectively paid out over \$30 million in prize money and earnings to professional picklers in 2024.

To rank the cities, we considered access to pickleball courts and tournaments, the size of the local pickleball community — from Meetup groups to MLP teams — and local interest in the sport from Google searches, among 11 total



metrics.

Here are the top 20 states for playing pickleball. San Jose ranks 60th.

- 1 New York NY
- 2 Houston TX
- 3 Chicago IL
- 4 Miami FL
- 5 Atlanta GA
- 6 Las Vegas NV
- 7 Charlotte NC
- 8 Cincinnati OH
- 9 Mesa AZ
- 10 Los Angeles CA
- 11 Austin TX
- 12 St. Louis MO
- 13 San Diego CA
- 14 Seattle WA
- 15 Orlando FL
- 16 Tucson AZ
- 17 Dallas TX
- 18 Minneapolis MN
- 19 Scottsdale AZ
- 20 Tampa FL

Read the full story here: <https://lawnlove.com/blog/best-cities-playing-pickleball-usa>

Nutcracker

Continued from page 1

celebrating 60 years of Nutcracker magic in San José," says Elizabeth Sweeney, Executive Director of San Jose Dance Theatre. "Each guest sweep embodies the collaborative, community-centered heart of SJDT."

San Jose Dance Theatre is proud to welcome the following guest chimney sweeps:

Guest Chimney Sweep Appearances

- December 13, 2:00 PM: Viscount Michael North – San Jose Restaurateur
- December 13, 7:30 PM: Elizabeth Sweeney – SJDT Alumna & Executive Director
- December 14, 2:00 PM: Ron Murietta – Arts Industry Support Director, San Jose Office of Economic Development & Cultural Affairs
- December 20, 2:00 PM: Shan Berries – Radio Host at Mix 106.5, Founder of Shades By Shan Cosmetics & The MamaBerries Foundation
- December 20, 7:30 PM: Holly Barr – Realtor & Founder of Willow Glen Charm
- December 21, 2:00 PM: Matt Mahan – Mayor of San José

Each guest artist will appear live on stage in their scheduled performance, contributing to the joy, humor, and theatrical sparkle of this long-standing holiday tradition.

This special addition is part of San Jose Dance Theatre's ongoing celebration of its Diamond Jubilee year, honoring the generations of dancers, families, and local supporters who have made The Original San José Nutcracker a cherished cultural landmark for six



The Original San José Nutcracker, San Jose Dance Theatre is introducing a special new tradition: Guest Community Chimney Sweeps, featuring notable local leaders and beloved public figures in cameo appearances at Nutcracker weekend performances. Among those appearing this year are (left to right) **Elizabeth Sweeney**, Executive Director of San Jose Dance Theatre; **Nicole Haskins**, Artistic Director of San Jose Dance Theatre, San Jose Mayor **Matt Mahan**, and **John Torrey**, Board President of San Jose Dance Theatre.

decades.

About San Jose Dance Theatre

Founded in 1964, San Jose Dance Theatre is a premier nonprofit arts organization dedicated to excellence in dance training, performance, and community enrichment. For 60 years, SJDT has brought the magic of The Nutcracker to Silicon Valley and provided world-class ballet education to young dancers across the region.

Sacred Heart issuing urgent call for donations of frozen turkeys, hams, and chickens for Christmas

By Sean Eastwood  
Times staff writer

Sacred Heart Community Service has issued an urgent call for donations of frozen turkeys, chickens, and hams to meet their goal of distributing Christmas food boxes to 3,200 community members starting Monday, December 15th.

Sacred Heart relies on the generosity of neighbors to help ensure every family has a joyful, nourishing holiday meal. Donations can be dropped off at 1381 South First Street in San Jose during the hours listed below.

Each Christmas food box contains about 50 pounds of 6non-perishable goods, fresh produce, bread, and a choice

of turkey, chicken, or ham, totaling about \$200 worth of groceries.

With rising food costs and ongoing cuts to SNAP benefits, these holiday boxes offer relief to families making difficult choices between rent, fuel, and food.

Hours: Monday to Thursday: 7 am to 4 pm  
Saturday: 9 am to 12 pm

1381 South First Street, San Jose, CA 95110

Make a monetary donation:  
<https://www.sacredheartcs.org/holidays25>

To donate food items or make an online gift, please visit <https://www.sacredheartcs.org/holidays25>.

To volunteer, visit <https://www.sacredheartcs.org/volunteer>.



Federal funds on the way to help upgrade VTA low-emission bus fleet

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) will receive \$20 million in federal funding for hybrid diesel-electric low-emission buses as it builds its fleet to help counter harmful environmental impacts.

VTA is one of 24 agencies across California to receive funding made possible by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law passed in 2023.

"Replacing outdated buses with low-emission hybrids isn't optional—it's essential," said Carolyn Gonot, General Man-



ager/CEO of the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority. "Government funding is critical to reducing harmful emissions, safeguarding public health, and ensuring our transit systems remain resilient for the future."

The federal Low-No Program helps transit agencies buy or lease U.S.-made low- or zero-emission buses and make critical facility, station, and charging upgrades to facilitate this transition. Transit agencies throughout California are tasked with converting to zero-emission/low emission fleets by the year 2040.

The funding is part of a nationwide federal investment of \$2 billion that will go to 165 transit projects in 45 states and Washington, D.C.



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## Candy Canes & District Gains: an end-of-year reflection

By Dave Cortese

As another year draws to a close, I want to take a moment to reflect on all that we've accomplished together in 2025.

Amid Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and other diverse holiday celebrations, December is also a prime time for reflection. Let us take this time to recommit ourselves to the values that make our district a place of resilience, innovation, and hope.

In the Capitol, this year undeniably brought its share of challenges to the State Legislature. When fires ravaged Los Angeles back in January and devastated the state budget, we recommitted ourselves to wildfire prevention and climate resilience with bills such as SB 429 and SB 653.

We refocused on workforce



**Senate Report**  
By Dave Cortese  
State Senator

development with SB 61 and SB 597, public safety with SB 753, educational equity, housing, veterinary care, and much more. Together, we secured funding for critical infrastructure, high-speed rail, education, and sustainability. And in the face of a turbulent federal administration, we fought to preserve due process and justice for all.

From our Unhoused Health Fair in January and our 22nd Annual Sacramento Bus Trip for Education in May, to various town halls on



Our in-district events this year have continued to ensure that constituent voices are heard.

wildfire resilience, traffic concerns, and legislative updates, our in-district events this year have continued to ensure that constituent voices are heard.

Our 3rd Annual Picnic by the Lake Multicultural Festival and Resource Fair in late October was yet another tremendous success in the district.

In this season of reflection, I hope you'll take pride in how far we've come and join me in looking to 2026 with optimism and resolve. As we look towards our upcoming Unhoused Health Fair in late January 2026, I encourage you to donate coats to our District Office Coat Drive for those in need. In

partnership with Opening Doors, be sure to stop by our office (1155 Meridian Ave Suite 100, San Jose) during business hours, drop off a coat, and receive a receipt for your donation.

Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful holiday season filled with warmth, laughter, and connection. Thank you for allowing me the continued honor of serving as your voice in the State Senate. As always, if you need any help navigating state services, accessing emergency resources, or participating in local events this month, please don't hesitate to call my District Office at (408) 723-4154 or send an email to [Senator.Cortese@sen.ca.gov](mailto:Senator.Cortese@sen.ca.gov).

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Happy Hollow Foundation is dedicated to preserving and enhancing Happy Hollow Park & Zoo so that it remains a community asset that is highly valued and accessible to all. Scan the QR code to learn more!



Times **Local News**

# Lawsuit challenges San Jose's license plate surveillance cameras

By Sean Eastwood  
Times staff writer

A lawsuit has been filed accusing San Jose and its police department of routinely violating the California Constitution by conducting warrantless searches of the stored records of millions of drivers' private habits, movements and associations with the use of ALPRs.

ALPRs are high-speed, computer-controlled cameras that automatically capture images of the license plates of every driver that passes by. There are currently nearly 500 ALPRs – collecting millions of records per month about people's movements – and keeps this data for an entire year. The cameras, the ACLU suit alleges, represent "invasive mass-surveillance technology without any suspicion that the driver has broken the law."

The lawsuit, filed in Santa Clara County Superior Court by the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) and American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California (ACLU-NC) on behalf of the Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SIREN) and the Council on American-Islamic Relations – California (CAIR-CA), challenges San Jose police officers' practice of searching for location information collected by automated license plate readers (ALPRs) without first getting a warrant.

The ACLU also has filed a Freedom of Information request, seeking disclosure of records that reveal that immigration agents in California "have threatened, brandished guns, and arrested those who record their raids."

The lawsuit states: "A person who regularly drives through an area subject to ALPR surveillance can have their location information captured multiple times per day," "This information can reveal travel patterns and provide an intimate window into a person's life as they travel from home to work, drop off their children at school, or park at

a house of worship, a doctor's office, or a protest. It could also reveal whether a person crossed state lines to seek health care in California."

The San Jose Police Department currently permits its officers and other law enforcement officials from across the state to search



Automatic license plate reader cameras. Photo courtesy of Electronic Frontier Foundation.

the ALPR database to instantly reconstruct people's locations over time – without first getting a warrant.

"This is an unchecked police power to scrutinize the movements of San Jose's residents and visitors as they lawfully travel to work, to the doctor, or to a protest," the lawsuit said.

San Jose's ALPR surveillance program goes beyond the norm in most California police departments. Few California law enforcement agencies retain ALPR data for an entire year, and few have deployed approximately 500 cameras.

The lawsuit, which names the city, Police Chief Paul Joseph and Mayor Matt Mahan as defendants, asks the court to stop the city and its police from searching ALPR data without first obtaining a warrant.

The lawsuit contends that the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution protects location information reflecting people's physical movements, even in public spaces.

"The California Constitution is even more protective of location privacy, at both Article I, Section 13 (the ban on unreasonable searches) and Article I, Section 1 (the guarantee of privacy)," according to the suit. "The SJPd's widespread collection and searches of ALPR information poses serious threats to communities' privacy and freedom of movement."



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# Birds

*Continued from page 1*

he has built a community of volunteers who now help maintain and monitor his many “trails” of boxes. Among them are Amanda Newlove, Steve Cassidy, and Jennifer Koga, who received recognition alongside him at the Almaden Valley Community Association’s recent Thankful Together Celebration.

Local craftspeople Bruce Watson and Chuck Wade build many of the boxes used on Pauser’s trails and also supply nest boxes for groups such as the Santa Clara Valley Bird Alliance, local scouts, and school classrooms. Residents can learn nest-box care and building through SCVBA programs.

The ripple effects of Pauser’s work can be seen throughout the community. In 2006, nest boxes he installed in Guadalupe River Park produced the first Western Bluebird nest in downtown San José in 50 years. Some residents have even reported bluebirds nesting in backyard boxes he provided.

Pauser has also assisted with Barn Owl rehabilitation, helping foster or release 107 rescued owlets in partnership with the



May 2025: freshly hatching Western Bluebirds. Photo by Amanda Newlove

# HAVE SOME NEWS TO SHARE?



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Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley.

Volunteerism extends beyond birds. Steve Cassidy, a Santa Clara County Parks Land Steward, has spent five years restoring native habitat in Santa Teresa County Park. He has planted more than 800 native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers, many grown from seed in his own backyard, and maintains an impressive 85% survival rate. Cassidy combines planting with invasive-species removal and even hand-waters young plants during the summer. He also monitors nest boxes in the park and recently took on 67 more from Pauser’s trails.

Amanda Newlove, an avid bird-er and accomplished nature photographer, began monitoring 26 boxes in Santa Teresa Park in 2023 and now helps recruit and support new volunteers. Thanks to her efforts, Jennifer Koga monitors Pauser’s 36 boxes in Guadalupe Oak Grove and Jeffery Fontana Parks, as well as Barn Owl boxes in Martial Cottle Park.

Together, these volunteers form a growing network committed to supporting native birds and restoring local ecosystems. Their work shows how much can be accomplished when community members give their time—and their hearts—to nature.

**Interested in helping local wildlife?**

You can learn more about nest-box building, habitat restoration, and volunteer opportunities through local organizations such as the Santa Clara Valley Bird Alliance.

A simple birdhouse in your yard might be the start of something much bigger.

**About AVCA**

The Almaden Valley Community Association (AVCA) is a non-partisan, volunteer-led organization dedicated to helping residents understand and engage with the neighborhood issues that impact everyday life. Through open, educational forums and respectful dialogue, we connect residents with local leaders, subject-matter experts, and diverse viewpoints.

To learn more about AVCA, visit <https://www.avcasj.org>



**Helpful Tips:**

- Know how to download your camera footage
- When mounting cameras, please be aware of places where people may have a reasonable expectation of privacy (examples: their backyard or interior of their home)
- Focus and mount your video on key points of entry or concern
- Exterior Mounting Location Options: Front door, rear door, side gate, driveway/front parking lot, second floor wide view and street view.
- Keep batteries charged in your cameras.
- Consider lighting around your cameras.

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Times Local News

## History San Jose looks forward to 2026 events

By Bill Schroh, Jr.

**M**erry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Kwanzaa Wishes, and Happy Holidays!

As we close out 2025, I would like to thank all of you for your support of History San José over the past season. Whether you attended an event or festival, visited the park, became a member, or gave a donation, your support means the world to us!

Without supporters like you, we would be unable to offer new events and festivals, create exciting education programs, and provide you with the best museum experience we can offer! Just because the year is almost up doesn't mean that our work at HSJ comes to a halt. Yes, we will take a breath, enjoy the Holidays with our families and friends, and regroup- but we are also hard at work planning our amazing 2026 season!

As you all know, history can be viewed through many different lenses. Two people could live through the same moment, but their narratives are often very different. This is happening at History Park right now! We will be looking at the mid-1960s through two different angles this weekend. First, our brand-new exhibit: South Bay Flashback: Riffs, Rhythms, and Revolution. The exhibit

it explores the politics of the counterculture that underpinned much of the music of the 1960s through pieces from Bill Guardino's private collection.

Guardino's posters, fliers, underground newspapers and business cards chronicle the bands, venues, publications, and radio stations that made up San Jose's Rock and Roll landscape in the 1960s. Meanwhile, a totally different view of the mid 1960s will be taking place at our annual members' Heritage Holiday Tea. Our mid-century holiday themed tea, complete with silver and pink tinsel trees, period decor, and a period-inspired menu looks at the art, architecture and clothing styles of the midcentury design movement. Both things were happening at the same time yet show very different views of the 1960s!

While winter is a time of celebration, it can also be a time for reflection. I am sad to report that two important members of the History San José family passed away over the last few months. In October we lost Robert J. Bettencourt, a long-time benefactor of History San José. Rob was instrumental in bringing the Pasetta House, which was the home of his grandparents, to History Park.

On November 29th Loc Vu, founder of the Immigrant Resettlement & Cultural Center (IRCC) and the Viet Museum passed away. He founded the Viet Museum in 2008 because he felt that it was important to share the Vietnamese American experience so that future generations would know the stories of their ancestors. These two giants of San Jose will be missed, but their legacies will live on at History San José.

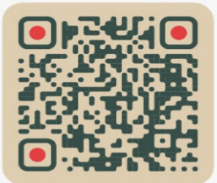


**History San José**  
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**FRIDAY, DEC 12 | 10:30AM**  
Excerpts for a younger audience



Times **Local News**

## San José Public Library reveals top checkouts of 2025

**S**J Library members' reading trends feature a children's favorite as overall leader for a second year in a row.

As another year comes to a close, San José Public Library (SJPL) is excited to share the most checked out titles by its library members in 2025.

From humorous graphic novels to transforming historical fiction, this year's top picks celebrate the diverse interests of our community and highlight the library's pivotal role in fostering a love for reading and learning.

The following titles are the top checked-out books of 2025 at SJPL:

Taking the crown as the most checked-out title in the "Adult" age group, Kristin Hannah's *The Women*, sweeps readers into a compelling coming of age story.

The prequel to *The Hunger Games*, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* by Suzanne Collins, remains the top pick for "Teen"

readers for two consecutive years.

Once again, a Dav Pilkey title shines on top in the "Children" age group, *Dog Man: The Scarlet Shredder*, was the most checked-out title for that age group.

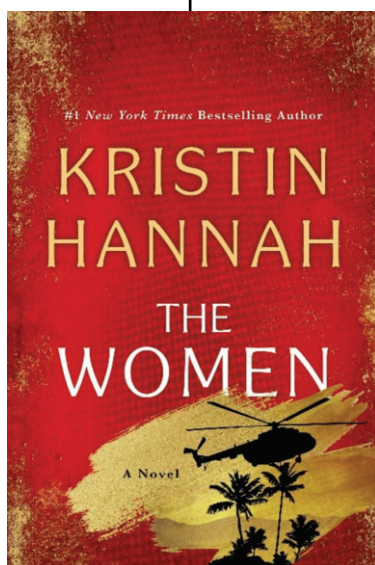
*Dog Man: The Scarlet Shredder* by Dav Pilkey also claims the number one spot as SJPL's top checked out book across all age groups, genre, and formats, exemplifying the unquestionable popularity of the Dog Man series. For a second year, author Dav Pilkey is one of only two authors listed in SJPL's top ten Children's booklist.

View the complete list of the San José Public Library's top ten borrowed books in the adult, teen, and children's age group at: <https://www.sjpl.org/BestOf2025>.

There, you can also view the top five checked out books in Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese, regardless of age, genre and format.

SJPL serves over 760,000 library cardholders and recorded an impressive 8.1 million items checked out over the past year. To borrow items from SJPL, all you need is a library card, which is free, easy, and rewarding to have.

For more information, visit: [sjpl.org/membership](https://www.sjpl.org/membership)



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## The Pacific Mole Crab: A vital yet vulnerable member of California's coastal ecosystem

By Matthew Frazier

*Times newspaper columnist*

The Pacific mole crab, scientifically known as *Emerita analoga*, is an intriguing marine species that thrives along California's sandy beaches.

This small crab, usually measuring about two inches in length, is a critical component of intertidal ecosystems found predominantly along the picturesque shores of Santa Cruz and Half Moon Bay.

In the effort to understand and protect this unique species, it is essential to recognize the various challenges it faces, particularly as we look forward to 2026. The populations of Pacific mole crabs along California's central coastline are currently at risk from a multitude of environmental changes and human-induced threats that pose serious challenges to their survival.

Among the foremost threats confronting sand crabs are issues related to domoic acid toxicity. Domoic acid is a potent neurotoxin produced by harmful algal blooms, whose proliferation is often caused by specific environmental conditions such as nutrient runoff and rising sea temperatures. As these blooms expand, they can accumulate in sand crabs and other marine organisms, posing severe health risks not only to the animals themselves but also to humans who inadvertently



The small and intriguing marine species known as the Pacific mole crab.

consume contaminated seafood.

Public awareness increased this year regarding the ramifications of domoic acid prompted new regulations to safeguard public health. Exposure to this toxin can lead to severe neurological disorders and is even associated with fatalities in extreme cases. The situation is pressing as ocean conditions continue to shift due to climate change, exacerbating the frequency and intensity of harmful algal blooms and the associated risks.

Pollution, particularly plastic waste and heavy metal contamination, intensifies the adverse impacts on Pacific mole crabs. They are prone to ingesting plastic debris, mistaking it for food, which can result in severe health issues, including intestinal blockages and exposure to harmful chemicals.

Public awareness campaigns are crucial to inform beachgoers and local communities about the ecological importance of sand crabs and the dangers of pollution. Collectively, the understanding and conservation of *Emerita analoga* are vital not only for the species itself but also for the health of California's coastal ecosystems.

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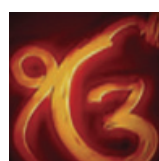


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