

# Northern Exposure

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## **Tour de Manure supports firefighters**

SIERRAVILLE Cyclists are saddling up for the Sierra Valley Tour de Manure, a 30- to 60-mile looped bike ride that promises to deliver.

The course wends past ranches where cattle far outnumber people. A welcome sign at Sattley claims 30 chickens, eight goats, 400 cows and 62 residents. Numerous caution signs warn riders of “bull shippers” as they meander past meadows and historic ranches established in the 1860s by Swiss Italian immigrants.

“We’re real rural,” said Dan Wentling, chief of Sierraville Volunteer Fire and Rescue, an all-volunteer department that is sponsoring the June 21 ride as a fundraiser.

Participants register to the yodeling of Dwight Brooks, a local cafe owner heralding a full day of music. When Pigs Fly BBQ will provide a beans and tri-tip lunch.

The event’s first-edition cycling jersey features a raging bull snorting steam from his nose and surrounded by polygon-shaped plops representing the event’s moniker.

Tour de Manure is the inspiration of Doug Read, a local homeowner and cycling zealot who wanted to span the cultural gap between ranchers and riders. His brainchild, now in its sixth year, has rallied locals and outsiders alike to “share the valley,” said Tami McCollum, a fire department volunteer.

Wentling advised cyclists to keep their eyes open for hawks, yellow-headed black birds, sandhill cranes and, of course, manure. While he promised not to “salt” the course, Wentling made no guarantees for riders stuck behind cattle trucks: “It can get a little brown when they go around corners.”

## **Fishing museum is cramped but rich**

DUNSMUIR As fishing stories go, Dunsmuir’s is no exaggeration. The Siskiyou County town caught in the canyon carved by the upper Sacramento River has what fish want: cold water and plenty of insects.

It has what anglers want: The state's oldest fly shop started by and named for Ted Fay, one of the region's most beloved fishing icons.

Today, Dunsmuir also has "The Golden Era of Fishing," a museum exhibit celebrating the town's claim to fame in a history of the river from around 1850 to 1950.

On display are a cane rod and creel dating from 1945, bamboo rods, and photos that include a rare vintage shot of Ted Fay himself. Some items are on loan from Bob Grace, third owner of the Ted Fay Fly Shop.

Every museum visitor adds to the show's richness, said Carol Skalko, its curator: "People come in for the fishing exhibit and get hooked on the history. You meet them, and they tell their stories."

Don't expect the Met. The fishing show is housed in a glorified hallway in the Southern Pacific dispatcher's office that now serves as both an Amtrak station and the new Dunsmuir Museum. Volunteers rescued it from wreckers in 1970.

"Fishing and the railroad – that's what we have up here," said Skalko, a self-described avid fly fisherman. "We're just a bunch of volunteers trying to preserve this rich history."

### **Marine mammals have friends**

CRESCENT CITY What smells like fish and sounds like a henhouse gone guttural is a bootstrap rescue operation. Flipper-strap, actually.

[Sea lions](#), harbor seals and other pinnipeds arrive at Northcoast Marine Mammal Center on the brink of starvation, brought in by trained volunteers who work the 220-mile coastline between [Mendocino County](#) and the Oregon border.

Lately, the rescued are mostly elephant seal pups with enormous round eyes set in broad, bewhiskered faces. Their weight has typically ballooned from about 80 pounds at birth to as much as 300 pounds, only to drop back dramatically and put them close to death, said Dr. Dennis Wood, a veterinarian who founded the nonprofit center in 1985.

He can only speculate about what happened to his 22 elephant seal pups after they were weaned: "The ocean conditions seem to be different where their [food supply](#) is found. They're just not getting enough food."

So Wood and his round-the-clock staff of volunteers start the starving pups on electrolytes, advancing to fish mash and herring before moving them into a pool where they compete for food.

Despite the strain of full-capacity operations, the center's public education campaign seems to be working. Fewer harbor seals need rescue than a decade ago because more people understand the need to leash dogs on the beach, Wood said.

And care is paying off for the elephant seal pups: Nine are scheduled for release this week.

Jane Braxton Little covers issues affecting Northern Californians.

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*Jane Braxton Little, a freelance writer, covers science, natural resources and rural [Northern California](#) from [Plumas County](#). Reach her at [jblittle@dyeypress.com](mailto:jblittle@dyeypress.com).*