

Pacifica Tribune



Jean Bartlett photo

In 2016, PBC president Lynn Adams, second from left, posed at the PBC's Earth Day EcoFest with Steve Shimek of The Otter Project, Pacifica Mayor Sue Digre and PCT videographer Steve Brown.

Earth Day / Pacifica Celebrates

Getting by with a little kelp

PACIFICANS READY FOR EARTH DAY WORK

By Jean Bartlett
Tribune Writer

Pacifica's 15th Annual Earth Day Celebration has arrived. This Saturday morning, thousands of locals will be on the streets, along paths, beside the ocean, near creeks and streams, in the brush, on the hills, and outside businesses, neighborhoods and schools to pick up and clean up that which is not wanted and is never needed – litter. The event is run and hosted by the Pacific Beach Coalition (PBC). It is done so in partnership with the City of Pacifica and its residents. This year's theme is "We All Need A Little Kelp."

The day begins with cleanup at 9 a.m. and continues with the EcoFest at Linda Mar State Beach. The latter begins at 11 a.m. It features: environmental booths, food, face painting, a petting zoo, activities, bands (Coast Tribe, No Direction and

Queen Green) and speakers. One of the speakers is professional surfer, writer and filmmaker Kyle Thiermann. From Santa Cruz, he is the founder of Surfing for Change.

Speaker Josie Iselin is an expert on kelp. A professional photographer, book designer and author, her work celebrates and educates on such marine finds as seaweed, including kelp – the large brown algae seaweed which grows in underwater forests. The results of her "finds" can be found in print, in solo and group exhibitions, and in artwork collections. (Visit her website: www.josieiselin.com.) This coming August marks the release of her latest book, "The Curious World of Seaweed: Stories from the Pacific Coast." Written, photographed and designed by Iselin, it features sixteen chapters, each with a focus on a kelp or seaweed. Like all of her works, this book is visually driven.

"The iconic kelp I investigate are feather boa kelp, giant kelp, bull kelp, bladder chain wrack and walking kelp," Iselin said. Also included among the seaweeds are red coralline algae. One chapter is devoted to seagrasses.

Local beachcombers may recognize Iselin. She travels with a bag on hand in case "something cool" in the seaweed realm finds its way to her search location. She also keeps her rubber boots at the ready for walks on rocky reefs and she is always armed with her phone so she can take pictures.



Jennifer Asselstine photo

Kelp author, photographer and expert Josie Iselin holds a group of kelp upside down, noting, "The part of the kelp that holds it to the ocean floor – the holdfasts – felt like a beautiful bouquet."

Seaweed finds will remain in her refrigerator until she has time to scan them. She has been using a flatbed scanner as her camera since 1994. She discovered her love of photography, at age 13, with her parents' old film camera. She began with

black and white photographs and learned how to develop and print the pictures. Now she works exclusively in digital photography. She has an MFA in photography from San Francisco State University, and a BA in Visual and Environmental Studies from Harvard.

Iselin grew up in New York City. In the summer, her family frequented coastal Maine. There she would "wander the ocean's rocky shore and collect stones, sea glass and old bones – and whatever seemed interesting."

Most people walk by kelp. What made her stop that first time?

"Back in 2009, I was working on a book titled, 'Beach: A Book of Treasure.' I was out in the tide pools and while everyone else was looking for creatures like starfish and nudibranchs, I held a scrap of seaweed up to the sky and was wowed by the color and shape. I knew I had to get some of the seaweed back to my scanner. So I started making images of the colorful red and green seaweeds."

The artist, who has walked San Francisco's Fort Funston since her earliest days living on the West Coast, also began noticing the large clumps of kelp that "tumbled onto the beach."

"So I challenged myself to get a bull kelp back to my studio and onto my scanner. The result is the image used for the EcoFest posters. I still cannot help but hold some seaweed or kelp up to the sky when walking the beach. It is just so gloriously beautiful."

Looking so closely at the imagery inspired Iselin's interest in the science. Seaweed workshops, with the curator of algae at the University Herbarium at UC Berkeley, followed.

"Kelp forests of the oceans are as important as the rainforests of the continents," Iselin said. "They are carbon sinks, producing a significant percentage of the Earth's atmosphere. They create important, three-dimensional habitat for a huge range of species that rely on the kelp for protection from predators."

"Kelp forests of the oceans are as important as the rainforests of the continents," Iselin said. "They are carbon sinks, producing a significant percentage of the Earth's atmosphere. They create important, three-dimensional habitat for a huge range of species that rely on the kelp for protection from predators."

Kelp forests are the base of the food chain and many ocean organisms depend on them. In addition, for us humans, kelp is considered the world's most potent source of naturally occurring iodine, among many other gift giving health benefits.

"Kelp is very, very beautiful and fully worthy of our regard, our compassionate attention and our empathy."

PBC Earth Day of Action, Saturday, April 27, 9 a.m.-11:00 a.m., and EcoFest (Linda Mar State Beach), 11:00 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Hike, bike, shuttle or carpool. Parking is limited. Free parking and shuttle bus at Cabrillo School, 601 Crespi Drive. Visit www.pacificbeachcoalition.org for details.

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