

Emeryville COOL Fun Facts

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In May, those of us who enjoyed our state-sanctioned outdoor time on the nearby Bay Bridge Trail were treated to a special surprise: GOATS!!!

For the uninitiated, the Bay Bridge Trail is a bike and pedestrian path which traverses the eastern span of the Bay Bridge. The Emeryville trailhead is located across from IKEA on Shellmound.

The trail's landscape ranges from industrial port debris to California wildflowers. You can even access the spot where Key Route trains connected to ferries (see Issue 3 for more of this type of train content!).

So I was thrilled when hundreds of happily munching goats were added to the scenery, providing vegetation management expertise in exchange for SNACKS.



I expect to see goats performing their labors up in the Oakland Hills, but under the freeway?! NEVER! This also appeared to be the case for many online goat fans, who incorrectly assumed this was the renegade herd which had been spotted ravaging on suburban San Jose streets recently. It's been a bounteous time for Hot Goat News, what can I say?

I was also surprised to learn how many people, particularly city dwellers across the bay, were not aware of this common fire and flood mitigation practice, so I thought readers might enjoy knowing a little more about it. PLEASE TAKE A LOOK.

City Grazing is a San-Francisco based nonprofit which engages in the goat grazing industry (I cannot confirm whether these recent Bay Bridge Trail workers are property of City Goats™). According to their website, grazing is used to reduce fire hazards through "minimizing invasive brush such as Himalayan blackberry, Scotch and French broom, Cape and English Ivy, pampas grass, and poison oak." Apparently goats are highly valuable in clearing poison oak; for them, it's taste is likened to when we ingest hot sauce.

The most important fact I discovered on City Goats' website is that "goats not only convert unwanted weeds into healthy soil, they also bring communities together, create compelling work for people, and inspire us all." WELL I'LL SAY, CAUSE I WAS PRETTY INSPIRED!

Along the Bay Trail there were grizzled wizard goats straight off a black metal album cover, rowdy goats jumping aggressively into the bushes to find their favorite hardy leaves, goats with soft ears that sneezed, goats that wanted to say hi through the fence (don't feed them!), goats looking at other goats, goats scratching their butts on sticks. SO. MANY. GOATS.

I could have easily spent all day observing the scene! And there's one

element we haven't yet discussed: the sheepdog.

This particular trip of goats (that's what it's called, I'm not making it up) was accompanied by a large sheepdog called Lucas (this one I am making up) who alternated between aggressively barking at human lookie-loos, and then flopping over and passing out so heavily he looked dead. Zero to 100. That's what I'm talking about with my dog Lucas here.

In case you're wondering about the historical implications of goat grazing for vegetation management locally, take a gander at another town outlet, *The E'ville Eye*, who similarly enjoyed happening upon a tribe (that's also real) of working goats clearing brush on the Sherwin Williams development in 2015: <https://evilleeye.com/in-the-neighborhood/sherwin-williams-employs-goats-to-clear-property-vegetation/> (where I learned that dogs are generally chill around goats except for POODLES who apparently loathe them and unleash a torrent of aggro anti-goat energy)

A final fun fact: the Tuchayune Ohlone bit of land popularly known by its Spanish colonial name Yerba Buena Island was for a time named Goat Island.



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We have a hero in our midst! Our Public Art Coordinator for Emeryville came through with the critical info we all needed: the two mysterious paintings at 5959 Horton Street were created by none other than San Francisco-based artist Jay Mercado! I'd recommend a trip to his website where he's been making black-and-white sketches of his interior views during quarantine: jaymercado.com. Huge shout out to Amber Evans for these crucial FACTS!!!

Do you have info on herstoric goats in Emeryville? Hot tips on where to find in-person grazing action? Ideas for future issues?

Leave a message at (510) 519-7283