



FIRST CLASS MAIL

# **KNAPSACK** CONTRA COSTA HILLS CLUB

## JANUARY 2026 NEWS

Greetings CCHC members! Hope you have had a good holiday. This issue will be slightly late as several of us (including the editor) have been celebrating! We apologize.

We recommend you consult the club website at <https://contracostahills.org/index.html> for updates and additional information. Also visit our safe section in groups.io for announcements, late updates, as well as pictures and write-ups from past hikes.

Thank you for your support of the club, and see you on the trails.



*December 18 – Bird Bell Hike – 75 of us showed up to honor Patricia!*

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:** As we say goodbye to 2025, let's welcome 2026 with a hopeful spirit and optimism that the next 12 months will be kinder and perhaps more peaceful. The Club recently saw a heartwarming gathering of nearly 75

people to share in what had become an annual hike around Lafayette Reservoir led by Patricia Derickson. Most of us hiked to the tree that had been chosen in the past, where we hung our birdseed bells and facsimiles. Once we completed

# CCHC KNAPSACK – JANUARY 2026

the hike, we indulged in an incredible display of food: mostly cakes, pies, cookies, candy, sandwiches - all fat-free, of course. Some of us shared kind words about Patricia whom we all adored and miss. For those of you who were not there, Patricia generously donated a check to the Club, which was given to me by the Derickson family. As a reminder, Jerry, Frank, and I hope to see you on New Year's Day at Coyote Hills for our annual gathering to welcome the New Year. You are encouraged to bring a treat to share as we toast the New Year. There are many excellent hikes to partake this Winter Quarter. I am grateful to those of you who lead hikes, serve on the Board, on a committee, or in another capacity. Lastly, I hope you had a Happy Holiday. Stay well and take care. Respectfully submitted, Stew Perlman

## NEWS AND EVENTS

We have lost three beloved members over the past year.



**SONJA WILKIN** was born in London, England in 1936, and died last February. She grew up in Rio de Janeiro, and came to the US to attend Cornell University. She married Kim Wilkin from Orinda and they lived in several states before settling in Clayton in 1986. Sonja was active in many groups

including Kappa Sigma, Diablo Women's Chorale, Clayton Valley Village, and CCHC. Sonja reserved time for her large family, including two children and their spouses, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nephews, nieces, siblings, and cousins with whom she stayed in close touch all her life.



**SUSIE HUANG** was a member of CCHC from 2012 through 2024. We knew her as a very high-energy person who enjoyed yoga, took part in marathons, and loved to travel. Susie was born in Hong Kong in 1950. From there, her family moved to Taiwan. After graduating from college in Taiwan, Susie came to the United States, attending Brigham Young University, then was on the staff of the School of Public Health at UC Berkeley,

eventually becoming CFO. Besides CCHC, Susie volunteered at Berkeley Repertory Theatre and the post-surgery unit at Alta Bates Hospital. She was the mother of two daughters and had two grandchildren. Susie passed away last June.

**PATRICIA DERICKSON** born in San Francisco in 1938. She worked at DVC for 29 years. Since retiring, was a valued member of CCHC since 2003, active as a leader, board member, book club member, corresponding secretary (card sender!), mentor, and source of good cheer. Patricia and her late husband Lloyd had 2 sons, 4 grandchildren, and 3 great-grandchildren. Patricia died last October.



## HOLIDAY LUNCHEON

Thank you all and especially Lucy Perdichizzi for once again making this a wonderful success.

*December 10 – Stew and Lucy at the luncheon*

**OUTING to SANTA CRUZ**, April 19–23. For more info, see the website or groups.io.

**WELCOME** To our new members, Michele Chavez, Tom Banfield, Kathy Garcia, Jill Langley, and Cynthia Robinson

**OPEN HIKES:** Thank you hike leaders! Open Sundays are 1/11, 1/25, 2/22, 3/1, and 3/15. Thursdays are full! If you have an idea, please contact Marilyn Vihman 510-708-3853 [m.vihman@berkeley.edu](mailto:m.vihman@berkeley.edu) or Jim Baranowski 925-577-1022 [brnw\\_th@yahoo.com](mailto:brnw_th@yahoo.com).

## CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

*"As we leave the turbulent year and we move into a New Year, let us hope that the new year will bring much needed care for the environment, peace and love among all peoples. Blessings to all for a wonderful season and the best of the New Year." - Beryl Vonderheid and the Conservation Committee*

In November 2025, the CCHC Conservation Committee gave donations to the Bay Area Ridge Trail, California Oaks Foundation, John Muir Land Trust, among other organizations. CCHC also contributes to Save the Bay, a regional conservation organization that advocates for policy changes, restores wetlands, and provides education to ensure a clean and healthy bay for people and wildlife in the Bay Area. Save the Bay recently published an inspirational message about "wonder."

# CCHC KNAPSACK – JANUARY 2026

There's wonder in the Bay.  
The kind that smells like salt and mud,  
that soaks your sneakers, that makes you laugh  
because you forgot the tide comes in fast.

Wonder is a heron taking off like a prehistoric jet.  
It's the bark of sea lions on the docks.  
It's a kid planting gum plant and shouting,  
Look, I saved the Bay! And maybe they did.

But wonder isn't just out there. It's in you.  
It's in every time you say: Yes, I'll show up.  
Yes, I'll dig in. Yes, I'll fight for this place.

Wonder isn't quiet.  
It's loud. It's messy. It's alive.  
And if you let it  
it will change the way you see the world.

The Bay is wonderful.  
So are you.

\*\*\*\*\*

**IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS:** A full set of write-ups and pictures can be found under CCHChikers on groups.io. Contact Rosemary Johnson with questions.



November 20 – Quirky Ashby Corridor

**FRANKLIN RIDGE, MARTINEZ,** November 30. Leaders Diane Cannon and Colette Cussary. Perfect day for the winter hike, freezing cold to our bones. Weather forecast showed 45°F at Franklin Ridge all the way till the end of our hike. Through the historical part of Martinez, passing by Joe Dimaggio's parents' house, we wondered if Joe also roamed around where we hiked today. Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline was opened 1989, so maybe not. Toward the ridge, climbing several sharp uphill finally warmed up our bodies. Landscape was wrapped by a gray veil. Far-distance melted into mysterious obscurity. Barely recognizable Suisun Bay and George Miler Bridge from the Hulet Hornbeck Trail. Unwelcome ridge-wind, unstoppable grazing cows storing energy for the frosty days. Dreaming about hot chocolate, we are 10 invigorated souls with rosy cheeks! After >2

miles circumambulating Franklin Ridge, we sat for our lunch wishing a hint of sun. We could see Mt. Tam to the west and Mt. Diablo to the southeast from the ridge on a clear day. Immersing ourselves in the winterscape, this was one of the most beautiful hikes of this season. Trails went through grasslands to oak, bay, and buckeye woodland. Valley oak fallen leaves carpeted the trail with various stages of colors. Beauty was to be found everywhere. Warmly remembering Fran L. who used to lead this hike, we'll send her our family photo taken at the ridge. A long stretch through town to the parking lot, then we summarized our hike at a warm cafe. ~8 mile with ~1200' elevation gain on the last day of November. Thank you, Diane and Colette for leading the vigorous hike and treats, and hikers and drivers for sharing camaraderie. – Sophia Garcia



December 4 – AAMLO and Preservation Park

## **AAMLO AND PRESERVATION PARK, OAKLAND December 4.**

Leaders: Noël Siver and Yvonne Moss. Noël and Yvonne put their heads together and came up with a delightful, educational, and delicious day. The hikers gathered in front of Oakland City Hall. Noël led them to the African American Museum and Library at Oakland (AAMLO). The American Beaux-Arts style library was built in 1902, funded by Andrew Carnegie. The group was met by library assistant Marco, who gave a thorough docent tour of the library and museum. On the first floor there was a section called a "seed library" where anyone is free to take seeds and start their own gardens. There were tables covered with copies of historic photographs of African Americans, which Marco explained in detail. Across the hall was a noncirculating research library. Using a scanner in the library, people can send materials they scan directly to their own computers. The walls of the grand staircase to the second-floor museum were lined with bright murals of African American people and historic events. The museum occupies the entire second floor. The room was a vast marbled open space with tall columns, and a cathedral-like vaulted ceiling. There were many exhibits. Two enlarged photos of noted African American men and women were printed on two enormous free-hanging sheets of fabric -- floating above the heads of museum visitors. At one end of the room was a screen and rows of chairs set up for large presentations. For more information and visiting hours, check out [aamlo@oaklandlibrary.org](mailto:aamlo@oaklandlibrary.org). Next, everyone walked to nearby Preservation Park, a grouping of 16 classic homes in Italianate, Queen Anne, Shingle, and Craftsman architecture. There are an outdoor fountain and a bandstand. The upscale 1870s – 1890s neighborhood had deteriorated by the 1970s.

## CCHC KNAPSACK – JANUARY 2026

All but five of the original houses were demolished. The construction of Freeway 980 endangered other nearby classic homes. The City of Oakland created a public/private partnership and relocated 11 other endangered buildings for a new life in a primarily nonprofit business neighborhood. For more information check out [preservationpark.com](http://preservationpark.com).

After a morning of history and architecture, many of the hikers went for lunch at "Rio California," a Brazilian-themed restaurant conveniently located in one of the classic homes. This restaurant was featured on "Check Please! Bay Area" and was so good that it got the highest ratings from the hikers. – Linda Malm



December 14 – Holiday Hike – San Francisco

**SAN FRANCISCO SEASON OF LIGHTS**, December 7. Leaders: Sophia Garcia, Linda Margossian, and Jo Anne Schultz. Season of Nostalgia; bittersweet memories, laughter and sorrow unsettle our minds. Swelling anticipation, strangers exchange gentle smiles on the street, we try to seek something special in winterscapes. Observing illumination in the dusk ignites a warm flame deep in our soul. We are the light seekers. Foggy, felt like 47°F in downtown San Francisco. Old history of Rincon Annex Post Office to new era of Salesforce Park, rooftop garden; we definitely preferred to be surrounded by green with lightings. Surprisingly, not so cold on the rooftop. Between plants, a gigantic bay bridge structure pops up like abstract art. We wondered what the High Line in Manhattan looks like at this season. In several blocks walk, after visiting decorative Pied Piper Bar, we found ourselves in front of an opulent Christmas tree in the Garden Court of the Palace Hotel. Family picture was taken.

By way of Kearny St. a serious climb up Pine St. to the Joice St. staircases. On the landing we found St. Francis of Assisi on his mission to somewhere (?). The vacant shrine looked rather sad. Christmas tree at Mark Hopkins, ever-young Tony Bennett, family-packed Fairmont Hotel. A long line to the Gingerbread House. It was a time for peace and tranquility with sunshine at Huntington Park. David passed around chocolates and we enjoyed gluten-free cookies baked by Marilyn L. Being content in winter sun at the top of Nob Hill, special visit to the World Tree of Hope and the Labyrinth at Grace Cathedral. 2000 paper cranes folded with hopes written on origami paper, mostly in white, silent messengers on the tree. Finally, downhill to the Cable Car Museum, Old St. Mary's Cathedral, via Maiden Lane to Union Square and Macy's Christmas tree. Sugar Castle, and countless lightings after lightings at The Westin St. Francis. We ended with Macy's Christmas window displays. By then, quite saturated in the festive air, we might miss just one simple candle in a window greeting the silent nights.

Thank you hike leaders for leading the hike and treats. Thank you, 27 hikers for enjoying this Season of Lights together. ~6.3 miles with 500' elevation gain. – Sophia Garcia



December 18 – Jo Anne, Jim, and lots of hikers at the Bird Bell Hike **PATRICIA DERICKSON MEMORIAL LAFAYETTE RESERVOIR BIRD BELL**, December 18. Leaders: Karen Arntzen, Georgette Armstrong, Lynne Vogensen, and Ed Osada.

The morning began under overcast skies as some of us walked from the Lafayette BART station while others drove directly to the Lafayette Reservoir where we gathered to begin our walk. This annual tradition, faithfully organized by Patricia each year, was dedicated this year as a Memorial Walk in her honor following her recent passing. As we set out, we also paused to sing Happy Birthday to Noël, making the start of the walk both heartfelt and joyful.

Several of Patricia's family members joined us, including one of her sons, her daughter-in-law, whom Patricia was exceptionally close to, and her grandson David. Both her daughter-in-law and David are also CCHC members. More grandchildren and great-grandchildren were present as well. Seventy-five people attended in total and we paused in a meadow to take a group photo before continuing our walk around the reservoir. Along the route, we stopped at the tree where members traditionally hang bird-seed ornaments. An 'in memory' tree ornament dedicated to Patricia had already been placed there, a touching reminder of her lasting presence. As we completed the walk, the clouds lifted, the sun came out and it truly felt as though Patricia was smiling down on us.

Afterward, we gathered for a luncheon filled with an abundance of shared food, along with Prosecco and Martinelli's and raised a toast to Patricia. Several people stood to share stories and fond memories, including Stew Perlman. There was laughter as jokes were made about how one never dared to sneeze in front of Patricia as she always would send out a Get Well card to any member who was unwell.

Patricia's granddaughter and daughter-in-law spoke, after which the family presented a \$1,000 check to the club that Patricia had arranged upon her passing. Tears were shed as we remembered this thoughtful, kind, and devoted woman who will be deeply missed by all who knew her. Thank you, Karen, Georgette, Lynne, and Ed, for organizing this special event. – Teresa Schwanauer

\*\*\*\*\*

Please contact James Baranowski at [brnw\\_th@yahoo.com](mailto:brnw_th@yahoo.com) if you have a comment or contribution. Thank you for your support.