



## NORTHERN EXPOSURE

*Jane Braxton Little covers  
issues affecting Northern  
Californians*

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### **Uneven jobless rates a reason to secede**

YUBA CITY You can't blame Sutter County supervisors for looking to the state of Jefferson for deliverance. California has crippled their industry, they say, burdening Sutter with the state's third-highest jobless rate.

At 13 percent unemployment, Sutter is close to double the [statewide average of 7.2 percent](#). No surprise, then, that county Supervisor Ron Sullenger refers to Gov. Jerry Brown as "an idiot" and hinted darkly of tyranny when he joined his colleagues in endorsing the [51st state secessionist movement](#).

Unemployment may, in fact, be the measure of the turmoil driving leaders in the six counties that support the state of Jefferson. Siskiyou, where the breakaway movement began, ranks 47th on California's 58-county jobless list; 10 percent of its workforce is unemployed.

Yuba County, where supervisors endorsed the state of Jefferson in April, has the dubious distinction of outranking Siskiyou on the jobless list. At 48th statewide, it bears a 10.4 percent unemployment rate.

Modoc, the second county to join the secessionist movement, is ranked 42nd. While unemployment in California is dropping, in the state's far northeastern corner the rate is

growing – up from 8 percent in October to 9.2 in November, according to the California Employment Development Department.

With unemployment averaging 10 percent in the six state of Jefferson counties, it may be just a matter of time until the secessionists claim the biggest prize in the north state: Colusa County, which has the second-highest jobless rate in the state. Unemployment in Colusa rose from 15.8 percent in 2013 to a whopping 16.9 percent in November.

Expect that aesthetically challenged green-and-yellow flag to fly over the Colusa courthouse in 2015.

## **Stealing a glimpse of history is costly**

[As Lake Oroville bares more and more of its bottom](#), it is exposing archaeological jewels hidden under water since the 1960s.

The drought-induced conditions have made the reservoir vulnerable to looters. They are after long-submerged artifacts. And state and local law officers are after them.

California park rangers and the Butte County district attorney's office served a search warrant on a Feather Falls resident suspected of pillaging thousands of items of cultural and spiritual significance to Maidu Indians, who occupied the area before the reservoir was built.

Arrowheads, obsidian tools and shells used in ceremonial gear are among the recovered booty, said Kurt Worley, Butte County deputy district attorney who is prosecuting the case still under investigation. Along with stealing Maidu artifacts, the looters have robbed tribal historians and archaeologists by taking relics out of their natural setting and destroying their cultural context.

Anyone arrested will face harsh penalties. In addition to state misdemeanors and felonies, charges could involve federal offenses and fines of \$10,000 and beyond.

Meanwhile, the park rangers who regularly patrol Oroville State Recreation Area have extended their surveillance through volunteers serving as site stewards, said Aaron

Wright, site superintendent. The naked shorelines that originally exposed artifacts are now equally exposing looters.

## **Prime time for mushroom hunting**

Call them chanterelles or black trumpets, pig ears or shrooms. By any name, mushrooms are popping up throughout drought-stricken Northern California wherever recent rains have soaked hillsides, lawns and forest floors.

From the coast to the Sierra, a bumper season for fungi has drawn school groups and gourmets, professional pickers and novices to the hunt. “Tons and tons of mushrooms just everywhere!” said Darvin DeShazer, science adviser for Sonoma County Mycological Association who has been foraging for decades in Sonoma’s fungi-fertile fields.

And while he likes to eat mushrooms, these days DeShazer gives away most of what he collects to the newcomers who join his field trips. “People just get so excited! They want to go home with something,” he said.

Across the state in Plumas County, mushroom enthusiast Herman Brown has found more than 30 species, some he has not seen in many years of foraging. “Once you get hooked it’s like finding pennies in the sand – especially if you eat them,” Brown said.

Among the tasty mushrooms are poisonous death caps, an invasive species that is spreading throughout the range. Naturally, California produces psilocybe, psychedelic “magic mushrooms” that can transform a stationary pine tree into a dancing earth goddess. Possession of these illegal fungi can also transport the picker to the pokey.

But who needs an out-of-body experience with mushroom fairy rings to entice seekers into their corporeal circles? The excitement is in the hunt for something neither plant nor animal. That’s what’s addictive.

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