



Coast Range Chronicles 27: “Badge of Honor”

by

Tom Mahony
pacificoffering@sbcglobal.net
www.tommahony.net

You might see them at work, school, or the grocery store, or perhaps dithering in a park. At first glance they’ll seem no different than anyone else. But listen closely, and you’ll hear it in their voice: a distinct twang of nasal congestion. Look closely, and you’ll see the telltale signs: salt crust around the eyes, matted hair, neck-tan and encircling rash. Smell closely (not too close) and you’ll inhale the curious bouquet of urine, neoprene, and rotting kelp.

To the uninformed, these may seem like markers of some pathetic down-and-outer, a troll fresh from the dumpster.

But the careful observer will recognize them as the lingering remnants of a surf session. While the quality of the session can’t be gleaned from the mere presence of these markers, they are positively correlated with session length. And, since longer sessions generally occur when the waves are good, you can do the math.

Or, I'll do it for you: Surf Quality = Nasal Congestion + Neck Tan + Encircling
Rash + Body Odor.

When the saltwater finally succumbs to gravity and gushes from the nose, often at inopportune and embarrassing moments, some onlookers may view the torrent with horror and disgust, branding the offender as antisocial, primitive, and/or deviant.

But the enlightened spectator will understand the discharge for what it is: a badge of honor. And a source of envy.