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# The Reactor

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## A fable to set you buzzing

You may not be aware that in what is now Pacifica there used to be a number of hog ranches, places where porkers were fattened up on stuff scraped off the plates of San Francisco's finest hotels. The hogs eventually returned to those same plates in the form of bacon and ham, a form of recycling that went on religiously long before recycling became the dominant religion it is today.

The world's smallest giant bumblebee, *Bombastus minigiganteum*, subspecies *oxymoronicus*, was associated with the Coastside hog ranches, depending for its existence on the mudholes created by wallowing hogs. Coastside hog mudholes, as you may or may not know, had unusual characteristics, including certain chemical compounds produced only when hogs live close to serpentine outcroppings. This unique geological/biological setting was necessary

to the existence of the *oxymoronicus* subspecies.

I regret to inform you that this unique and wonderful creature, a Coastside native which formerly buzzed with the joy of life, is no more. Furthermore, Tobin's Lousewort, *Montarensis mcneeei*, a small shrub with uniquely fluorescent flowers, which was dependent on the *Bombastus* subspecies for its pollination, also disappeared a few years after the last of the bumblebees. The last of these shrubs failed to reproduce itself about 1969 and disappeared, a victim of tract housing and the bumblebee shortage.

The last hog ranch closed down in the '60s, forced out by the recurring cries of "nimby! nimby!" from the settlers in the new housing tracts springing up down the road. "Nimby" is a Pottawottamy Indian word which translates to "not in my back yard, you blockhead." Because hogs and the new human neighbors

were incompatible, the last of these rare and wonderful bumblebees has departed. Hogs and the bumblebees formed part of a unique ecosystem.

The chain has been broken. We shall never see these special bumblebees again. *Bombastus minigiganteum oxymoronicus* is believed to have split off from the main line of bumblebees at an undetermined time during the last ice age. At first it was associated with native wild hogs and grizzly bears. As these dwindled, domestic hogs took their place. Cries of "Sooeey" brought not only the hogs, but the bumblebees, ready to soak up the unique mud. Unfortunately, only in the community which would later be called Pacifica was this combination of hogs, bumblebees and serpentine mud to be found. Every place on earth has its own unique qualities. The Coastside is no exception.

Nature is a place of infinite variety, and we are the poorer for the loss of this little buzzer and its associated Lousewort. However, if we take this lesson to heart, perhaps we will think twice before demanding expulsion, even of something like a hog ranch which has its odorous shortcomings.

The next time you hear someone cry "nimby!" remember our tiny *Bombastus* and this allegory for our times.