

POISON FREE— ONE CITY AT A TIME

BY MARY HOLMES
ALL PHOTOS ©POISON FREE MALIBU

Joel and Kian Schulman are the powerhouse husband and wife team who founded Poison Free Malibu in 2013. What they've accomplished in the last seven years is nothing short of amazing. As stated on their website: "Our mission is to educate the public about the problems with pesticides, how they affect the wildlife food web and our total environment, and to offer viable solutions. Pesticides are in the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. The overall health of our children, pets, wildlife and environment is our goal." It all began when Kian read a newspaper story about a mountain lion being found dead by hikers at Pt. Mugu State Park. The Schulmans started asking questions; the mountain lion was necropsied and it was determined he died from rodenticides. Thus began the Schulman's quest to educate the public and the politicians about the food chain and have all those ubiquitous "black boxes" removed.

Starting out in their own backyard, in the City of Malibu, there efforts have spread everywhere, so far, all the way to South Carolina. Malibu, naturally, was an early victory. As Kian stated, "Back in 2013 Malibu was the first one to promote a resolution against the use of rat poisons. We have eleven different cities now in Southern California that have looked to ban these horrible rodent poisons that are poisoning our wildlife, pets, and children. The most recent assistance we did was with Laguna Beach and we were just really happy



RAT POISON IS WILDLIFE POISON

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to bring Laguna on board. We look forward to doing more and more cities." She said they have also created an umbrella organization, CARP (Citizens Against Rat Poisons), which will oversee and support the efforts of other cities that want to eliminate pesticides in their communities.

Like all of us, Poison Free Malibu is dealing with the results of the global pandemic. Many of their educational efforts in the past involved going out and doing presentations in front of homeowner's associations, city councils, and the like. Their educational efforts are now more virtual in nature; they are creating videos that interested parties can view on their website. In fact, LA County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl was instrumental in getting the group a grant, so they can create more videos.

If dumpsters are maintained properly, there is no rodent problem. The Schulmans attested to what they personally have encountered. "Everywhere we went the dumpsters were in terrible shape. All these dumpsters, and there were poison bait boxes everywhere. When a manager or administrator sees that, or has complaints that there are mice or rodents running around what does one do? You call a pest control company. But the word to remember is – they're not really a pest control company. They are a poison provider. We've got to find a solution as to what is the cause of the problem. After you've limited their (the rodent's) food supply – no more food, no more mice, no more rats."

What's the big deal about bait traps, and rodenticides? Bait traps are everywhere; they are meant to kill rodents, but most people mistakenly think the rodents go in the trap, eat the bait, and die in the trap. The worst part of it all is, the bait traps only address the symptom, not the problem. The symptom is the prevalence of rodents in certain areas. The underlying problem is that dumpster users misuse and, in some cases, abuse their dumpsters. Therein lies the problem. The animals who eat the rodents who have been poisoned in turn become poisoned, as the rodenticides tend to be stored in the liver. On and on up the food chain it goes, to the very top.

That's not the only problem. Our companion animals may eat a dead rodent, and in turn become poisoned, or they may somehow get access to the bait itself. The bait itself is designed to be tasty; one of the common flavors is peanut butter. Children are also at risk.

The Schulmans began by targeting rodenticides, and broadened their approach to eliminating pesticides as well. Glyphosate is a common herbicide (Roundup contains it, for example), and like rodenticides, once it is ingested it remains in the body. Kian added, "All things are connected in the chain of death with the wild animal cycle, these pesticides are affecting us as human animals on a huge scale. On a massive scale of health problems dealing with anything from cancers, autism, reproductive problems, the list continues as to the physical problems that are resulting because of the amount of pesticides that are in our environment." They point out they convinced Pepperdine University to go pesticide free. "They got rid of all their bait boxes. We got them to remove these pesticides off their campus lawn. This is another whole issue we got to be thinking about and we're talking about public areas where children play, where pets play. Grass areas. Pets don't wear shoes. Children put their hands in their mouths and in the ground and crawl around on these grassy areas. You have to make sure those are also safe for our pets and children. We also delved into the total program, not just removing the rodent poisons, but also removing all these horrible chemical pesticides that include endocrine disruptors, cancer causing agents, and toxins such as this that affect all of us. This is important that we look towards a green policy towards our turf area also. Our whole environment where we live."

That brings us to the concept of preemption. "The California Constitution also allows the state to preempt local jurisdictions. The Constitution states that city councils or boards of supervisors may pass laws (called ordinances at the local level) provided they do not conflict with state law. However, California law (Chapter 1386, Statutes of 1984, FAC Section 11501.1) states that no local government may 'prohibit or in any way attempt to regulate any matter



Mountain Lion, P-47 of the Santa Monica Mountains. The National Park Service reported that testing on a sample of his liver showed that the three-year old male had been exposed to six different anticoagulant compounds, and a necropsy conducted by the California Health and Food safety Lab found internal hemorrhaging in his head and lungs.

relating to the registration, sale, transportation, or use of pesticides, and any of these [local] ordinances, laws, or regulations are void and of no force or effect. The 1984 legislation was in response to a State Supreme Court ruling that same year in *The People v. County of Mendocino*." (Excerpt from California Department of Pesticide Regulation, Chapter 2, p. 9)

The legislation came about because the pesticide industry lobbyists pressured the California legislature to do so, in reaction to a case in Mendocino County. Joel explained, "In 1979 a Mendocino County tree farm was spraying herbicides which drifted onto school buses, affecting school children. Mendocino County passed a law stopping that. So the pesticide industry and agriculture industry sued Mendocino County, and they took it all the way to the California Supreme Court, and the pesticide industry lost. The Supreme Court said, 'Yeah, it's perfectly fine. Counties can ban pesticides.' So, the pesticide industry lost. They went to the California Legislature and they bought a law to reverse that. They bought a law with their lobbyists to prevent localities, counties, or cities from regulating pesticides in any way at all. Now you can do it in the Coastal Zone, despite that, because state agencies are not affected."

To clarify, local jurisdictions can't ban pesticides in their jurisdictions overall, but can elect to ban pesticides from city property.

Malibu is in the Coastal Zone, though, and through Kian and Joel's efforts, it is likely the Coastal Commission will accept the City of Malibu's request that all pesticides be banned within the City. Malibu has banned the use of pesticides on city property since 2016.

Poison Free Malibu was also instrumental in bringing about the listing of the mountain lion as an endangered indigenous species. The California Fish and Game Commission voted five to zero for the listing. It will take effect next year.

Their accomplishments to date belie the fact they are a small organization. They have been indefatigable in their efforts, and created numerous like-minded allies along the way. The work they are doing benefits us all. Kian concluded, "It's not just the wildlife food chains. It's all food chains. So we are animals. and I'm proud to be consider myself a wonderful part of this animal food chain and life to identify ourselves on this level. It's really important to understand that we too are also being poisoned."

Poison Free Malibu Website: <https://poisonfreemalibu.org/>

Malibu City Council Meeting December 9, 2019

www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOys2e7dHFA&feature=youtu.be&t=3512

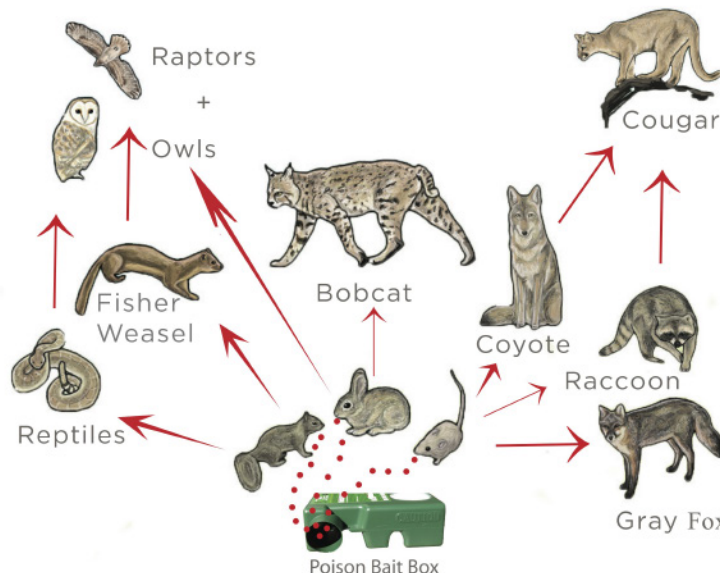
TOP: Joel Schulman (right) at Rally for the Animals, Malibu, 2019.

MIDDLE: Film team of the documentary, "The Cat That Changed America," about Los Angeles resident mountain lion P22: Miguel Ordeñana, Wildlife Biologist, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County; Joel Schulman, Poison Free Malibu; Beth Pratt, California Director of National Wildlife Federation; Tony Lee, Director/Producer; and Kian Schulman, Poison Free Malibu.

<https://thecatthatchangedamerica.com/>



All Things Are Connected



"Rodent Poisons Are Passed Up The Food Chain"



A Very Dirty Little Secret: The Bait Box – Killer to ALL!

Bait boxes are everywhere and rarely questioned nor understood. Most people are not aware that when a rat or mouse enters these “bait boxes,” they munch on the poison and leave. As they slowly die a miserable death, and become easy prey, other animals eat them, such as hawks, owls, coyotes, bobcats and mountain lions. They too die from second generation poisoning which also means the “natural predators” of rodents are also killed. The natural balance of the ecosystem is interrupted! If you want to humanely avoid rodents, there are several ways that are safe and humane for all! Here are some peaceful solutions.

- **Do not pay to kill!** Do not use an exterminator who will only leave poison and never “solve any problems” in the long run but will kill and interrupt the natural balance. A little effort can make a big difference!
- **NEVER use cruel and inhumane glue traps** that are designed to glue the animal down leaving it to starve.
- **Remember!** Mice eat plants and the seeds of plants including weeds to survive. They also prey on insects, helping to keep the populations under control.
- Mice sustain all carnivores includes snakes, fishers, foxes, coyotes, hawks, owls, skunks, bobcats, bears, and mountain lions. **Everyone has a purpose!**
- Consider humane “Havaheart” trapping and release where there is a water source. **The humane traps must be monitored and never left in the sun or wet. Consult a wildlife group if you are inexperienced.**
- Plant a border of mint varieties, lavender, rosemary, sage, marigolds, snapdragons, or geraniums **“Flowers That**



Deter Animals” include “aromatic annual herbs, such as mint, lavender and catnip. For perennial plants that repel mice, consider amaryllis (Amaryllis), lavender (Lavandula) or daffodils (Narcissus).

- Use **organic products** which include balsam fir, peppermint, clove, cinnamon, garlic barrier concentrate to deter.
- **Owls** are natural deterrents. Build owl boxes for your trees to encourage owls to stay.
- Businesses are adopting **“barn cats”** as rodent deterrents from shelters and caring for these new employees! www.vcas.us/info-resources/workingwhiskers
- **NUMBER 1:** Do NOT overfill trash dumpsters and **KEEP LIDS CLOSED!** Easy and no need for a bait box ever! No garbage, no rats, no poison! **CLEAN UP AND SEAL UP!**

For more information, please go to: <https://poisonfreemalibu.org/repel-exclude-deter/>



TOP: The deadly bait box that seems to be everywhere and rarely noticed. ABOVE: The short life of mountain lion P-34 of the Santa Monica Mountains. Photo on left shows P-34 at 14 months old in December of 2014 and the photo on right shows her at 23 months old in September 2015. The Natural Parks service reported that her necropsy showed significant amounts of free blood in her chest cavity and around her heart and that it appears that her death was as a result of rodenticide poisoning.