

# Monday Mania!

**6/29/2015**

Week 3 starts on Monday.

For at least a few of us, it can still be a lazy start. It was a lazy recovery from the Pride Parade in San Francisco on Sunday. It could have been a lazy awakening Monday morning—if it weren't for the zealous percussion of the untempered, crepuscular garbage truck summoned just outside our windows. Will that thing be collecting every other day, at this rate?

The perpetual days of sunshine and the soft oscillation in the number of clouds forecast a stagnant afternoon. The broad-leaved trees are tenaciously green while any grass unshielded from the sun is parched to a bleached-yellow. It looks like desiccated straw fringes the roads approaching the black gates into the center of base. Sweating, desiccated interns march like summer ants along the roads as they approach the black gates into the center of base. Some take pride in facing the heat, cheerfully beaming at the sun beaming brightly back at them. Others are eager to duck inside, where still, in the concrete depths of the labs, the sunshine quietly bounces down the hallways and blends with the cool fluorescent lights of offices and corners. The warm air blazes a path backwards through the ventilation vents, rustling down onto our heads. The glare of the early-afternoon sun reflects off the dirty windows in such a way that makes the layers of dust sparkle like water droplets on the tinted panes. Shimmering waves radiate from the roofs of cars parked on the simmering, faded asphalt.

It's not a calm before or after a storm. The "storm" is, for now, a steady crosswind of new deadlines—some far, some close. Work is ramping up, and we're beginning to settle into our projects. Some of us are settling into other routines. We've progressed from learning what GeneLab is, to trying to understand what our GeneLab project means for ourselves individually—so that we can fit it into our routines. Some of us are buying slightly larger amounts of groceries—more ingredients and fewer snacks—now that we know how to fit our meals into our routines. The planning process for what next new weekend adventure we'll have feels like a routine—and in some cases it's now even a delegated task.

Back at the lodge, a door propped open is the best AC we have, and the occasional dropping-by of friends are their own kind of fresh air. It's the chapter of an internship when it's finally time to do laundry—when the daylight hours are beginning to shorten, imperceptibly at first.

Come sunset, we finally have our weekend meeting—now permanently relegated to Monday nights. Some are eating a hastily prepared dinner, some are eating cookies collectively rewarded for completing the sundry surveys. As the night falls, the real work begins: agendas for weekends a month in advance are molded, the necessity of preemptively bombarding the GeneLab team with more emails is crystallized, the topics of imminent surveys are decided. We all feel bone-weary by the end of the meeting—not from sitting down and eating cookies, but

from the weight of all that is to come. New tasks are steadily accumulating. It's difficult to enjoy a lazy Monday afternoon. The steady crosswind of deadlines rattles loudest at night.



## Tac0 Tuesday!

6/30/2015

Come early Tuesday afternoon, the NASA Ames Research campus was eerily quiet. Labs, workstations, and conference rooms were abandoned. Experiments were left unfinished. (Even Brad Bailey's office was unoccupied!!!) Where could everyone be?

Take a short trip outside the black gates, and turn into Building 3 parking lot. There lies the answer to today's mystery.



The entire population of Ames had congregated in the hallowed halls of Building 3 to hear the famed Andy Weir deliver a talk for the NASA Summer Colloquium Series. As the auditorium reached full capacity, the resident fire marshal had to barricade the door against angry Weir-fans trapped outside the lecture hall. A lucky few were able to slip through the side doors while the fire marshal's back was turned.



Weir's talk was filled with science facts, witty commentary, and a sprinkling of profanity (to be edited by the NASA media team afterwards.) Weir finished his talk amid roars of applause, quickly exiting the auditorium to sign books for his fans. An assortment of sweet treats after the talk concluded one of NASA ARC's most successful events of the summer.

After the talk, the crowd dispersed, returning to their respective buildings. By noon, all was back to normal.

After a hard day at work, the tired SLSTP Team gathered to prepare datasets for input into the GeneLab database. What seemed to be a simple task quickly descended into chaos! Max hopped from SLSTPer to SLSTPer to help with various problems. It was soon clear that Homer's data upload system was not exactly perfect.



Various members grumbled about the status of the group project: confusion over the project's goals, difficult communication with management, and growing despair that SLSTP was not important enough. However, the griping and complaining quickly transitioned into constructive conversation. The team made a list of questions, concerns, and comments about the project to present at Wednesday's meeting.

What will be the outcome of tomorrow's meeting with GeneLab? Will it be an "expression of concerns"? Or an unleashing of ten SLSTPers' collective fury?!? Tune in for Max's piece tomorrow for the details!



# Hump Day!

7/1/2015

The beginning of Wednesday started with an email sent by Rebecca. It contained a link to a remixed version of the “Hump Day” Geico commercial. Indeed, the weeks, if not the last two days have begun to mix and blend together. It feels like it’s Friday, like it should be Friday, like there’s been enough sun to account for five days of summer heat. At this rate, won’t the sun run out? Won’t it burn itself to pieces? Won’t it have been to enough GeneLab meetings to have no more energy for the rest of the world? As we walk to our 8:30 AM GeneLab meeting, it indeed feels like the sun is already paying us special attention.

At our GeneLab meeting, it’s clear there are many gaps in mutual understanding that need to be filled. Some of us are speaking a lot in the meeting, trying to make sure all of our concerns are voiced. Some of the GeneLab team are asking us each a lot of questions, trying to make sure all of our concerns are voiced. The biggest issue at hand is reconciling our sole collective ability—being fancy concept artists. It’s clear that we can’t code actually on the website, and yet we can’t turn in something drawn with the spray paint tool in MS Paint. It’s a daunting task for both the GUI team and the Analytics Tool team to be both realistic and useful, not to mention that we still need to finish our data processing task soon.

Later for lunch, we’re guests to a fascinating brown bag talk by John Cumbers. Before the talk, synthetic biology seemed like a pie-in-sky, reinvent-everything, far-out and extraordinary use of limited science funding. Instead, John Cumbers illuminated us to the many possible and plausible applications of synthetic biology for space exploration and settlement. While printing new cells out of nothing is still a long ways away, he spoke about the possibilities synthetic biology and genetic engineering create for food production—specifically for emphasizing what’s called “closed loop” systems. Currently, the CO<sub>2</sub> exhaled by astronauts and living experiments aboard the International Space Station is converted to methane in order to extract the O<sub>2</sub>, which is then simply vented out into space. This loss of materials must be replenished by new shipments of food, the cost of doing which is tens of thousands of dollars per kilogram. The vision of “closed loop” systems is to have plants and engineered algae be able to re-absorb this CO<sub>2</sub> on the station by growing into food, thus completing the carbon cycle—the same way most of the water is filtered, purified and reused on the station. A vision for the future would be to not only have this engineered algae (or perhaps fully synthesized organisms) be able to grow into food, but also secrete any biomolecule needed—from complex medicines and nutrients, to structural materials such as spider silk and chitin. He described a future where space colonies need only start very small, like the tiny seed of a redwood, and then mine the carbon and water out of Martian or lunar rock (which are apparently relatively bountiful), thus growing itself bigger and bigger, instead of needing to transport all of the materials ahead of time. It was a very interesting prospect, and John Cumbers’ way of giving the talk felt much more like a fascinating story rather than a recruitment program or symposium—which I think we all appreciated.

Despite being Wednesday, some people in lab are already leaving early to start a long weekend. It's a slow day, even though we wish we could be doing more work. It's our last day that we can stay late as tomorrow we leave to camping, but the opportunity for late-night sciences passes by unseized. There are always more GeneLab datasets to work on, of course.

# Thirsty Thursday!

**7/2/2015**

## PROLOGUE

Thursday marked the beginning of the SLSTP Gang's mission to rescue the residents of the Del Valle Camping Grounds. The brave adventurers did not know what dangers lay ahead; all they knew was that people were calling for help and that they could not leave their calls unanswered...

## PART 1

As the SLSTP gang drew up to the Del Valle Camping Grounds, they knew something was terribly wrong.

"My sausage! It's not working!" Basem cried in despair. He angrily mashed the sausage surface, but to no avail. The only line of communication the SLSTP Gang had with the outside world was dead.

"I guess we'll have to face this one alone," Rebecca told the group. "Let's forge ahead."

The Gang silently trudged their way through the campgrounds. There was a full moon that night—no need for flashlights. All of a sudden, they heard a strange rustling noise.

"What is that? Let's go—"

Joe was suddenly swept off his feet and carried into the underbrush.

"No!! JOE!!" Rebecca yelled. The Gang ran to the side of the path where Joe was snatched. If Joe was somewhere in those woods, they needed to go after him. They worked their way through the dense vegetation, calling his name, all the while pushing further and further into the woods.

## PART 2

After hours of intense searching, the Gang decided to regroup and plan for what to do next. As they gathered around the campfire, discussing their next actions, a grating voice called to them from the darkness, "I know where the young boy is. Allow me to tell you, weary travelers..."

A haggardly, old woman emerged from the shadows.

"The monsters that took your friend, they are none other than..." (She paused for dramatic effect.) "THE AFRICANIZED HONEYBEES! They prey upon the weak. I would know. They viciously attacked my family just last night!!!"

A collective gasp went around the group. Were those the monsters that had been terrorizing the Del Valle Campgrounds and kidnapping their friends?

“We must find them!” Max yelled. “We must find them and avenge the lives of those we lost!”

The group, invigorated by this new information, thanked the hag, and ran into the forest to tackle the monsters. In their haste, however, they failed to notice some mysterious creatures gathering at the edges of the path...

As the group surged forward, the creatures hopped out of the shadows and started attaching to the members of the SLSTP gang. They were small, the size of ants, but extremely strong.

Jon and Chris were the first to go down. Their feet, engulfed by the creatures, were dragged up a hill, separating them from the rest of the group. Saumalu and Rebecca, the group’s fearless leaders, were the next to go.

The five remaining members of the SLSTP Gang were quickly surrounded by the creatures.

“Okay! We give up! We surrender!” yelled Victoria. “Take us to your leader!”

The tiny creatures finally revealed themselves. They were burs! (The hag must have mistaken the tiny burs for the similarly-shaped and similarly-sized Africanized Honeybee.)

The remaining members were tied up and brought to the burrs’ main camp, and thrown into the main jail cell.

“Victor? Guys? Is that you?” Saumalu called out.

“It’s us! Is everyone else here?”

Victoria pulled out a flashlight and shone it around the cell. Indeed, the ten SLSTP members were reunited! Huddled in other areas of the cell were other Del Valle campground residents.

“The other prisoners have told us that the burs are planning a huge BBQ. And the main course is us!” said Amanda in despair. “Do you guys have a plan? The cookout is happening in an hour!!”

The room immediately descended into chaos. Children started wailing, and various members of the group fell to the ground in despair. In the midst of the chaos, Chris said, “Wait guys! I have a secret weapon. But we’ll only be able to reveal it at the cookout.”

### PART 3

The cookout began. The tiny burs had a huge fire roaring, and started lining up the human prisoners for their final destination—the grill. As the prisoners ascended the steps to the grill grate, a voice yelled, “NOW!!”

All of the prisoners pulled out the secret weapon—Jiffy Pop! They rode onto the hot grill grate using the Jiffy Pop pans like surfboards. As the corn started to pop from the intense heat of the fire, the SLSTP gang members were elevated above the flames.

From their high vantage point, they sent flaming marshmallow skewers into the burrs’ encampment. One by one, the burs were engulfed in flame.

“Noooooooo!!!! We have finally been defeated!!” they yelled.

### EPILOGUE

The SLSTP Gang were lauded as heroes upon their return to the Del Valle Campgrounds. There was a huge party, including plenty of Kirkland Beer.

FIN

# Fabulous Friday!

**7/3/2015**

After a day with the trees  
and Africanized bees,  
the group stopped by a fresh lake.

It was full of duck poop  
and some indeterminate goop  
but a beautiful pond it did make.

In the bright summer sun  
Floated bundles of fun,  
Chris' shark floatie a popular hit;

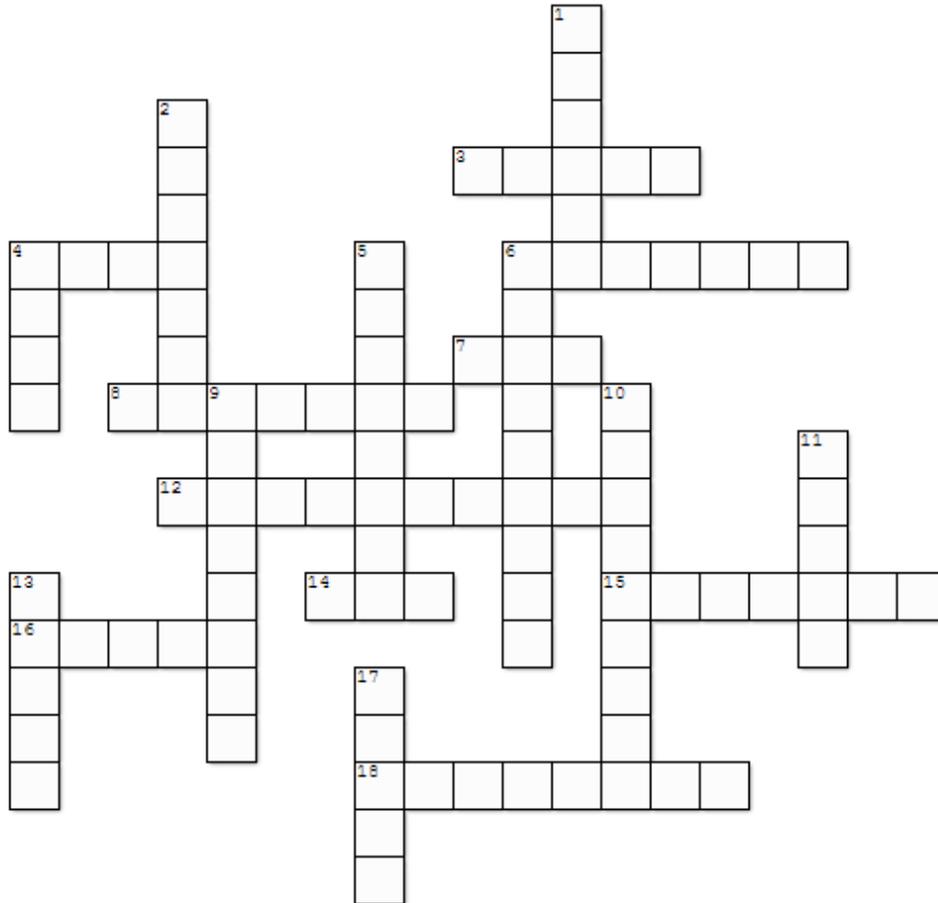
They tossed a football about  
Then had In-N-out  
Which was eaten up lickety-split.

In the evening was Blender  
which they left to go render  
while they had some delicious ice cream

To bed SLSTP!  
We watch "SLSTV",  
Streaming a Netflix dream

# Saturday Crossword!

7/4/2015



Created on [TheTeachersCorner.net](http://TheTeachersCorner.net) Crossword Maker

## Across

3. Game played in the evening
4. Soda that tastes bad with malibu (allegedly)
6. Drove group to wastewater treatment facility
7. Purveyor of BBQ Food
8. Weapon used to cut fruit
12. Fruit infused with vodka
14. Arrived to the event by bike
15. NASA Group not present at BBQ
16. Type of pie eaten
18. What Hawaiians call flip-flops

## Down

1. Wrote this crossword
2. Had trouble with ping pong balls
4. Rage \_\_\_\_\_
5. The favorite child (suspected)
6. Missed these fireworks
9. What's the \_\_\_\_\_ thing you've done?
10. Fruit infused with malibu
11. Attacked group during fireworks
13. Had two guest visitors for the games
17. Meat grill master

(Answers will be revealed!)

# An Ode To Sunday.

7/5/2015

Seven dollars for artisanal mac and cheese.  
Two dollars more for crumbled pancetta.  
When a pinch of bacon bits are a quarter the cost of lunch,  
You know you're back in San Francisco.



At least 348  
steps to the top  
of Telegraph Hill,  
The fog rolling in  
from the Golden  
Gate towards the  
Bay Bridge,  
Clematis Ernest  
Markham and  
Lillie Hitchcock  
Coit wait to greet us.



A jacket for the breeze, or no jacket from climbing the hills?



Fisherman's Wharf, where red crabs peer up from bins of ice,  
Where shrimp sandwiches are cradled in bread derangedly sliced.  
Ghirardelli Square, where a milkshake is ten dollars and twenty minutes,  
But a lemon-filled cupcake is three dollars. Milk is one dollar. Clarinet music is free.



Curve left. Curve right. Stand to  
the left. Stand to the right.  
Don't trip, don't fall, don't  
stumble, don't crawl.  
Listen to the traffic cop, keep  
walking, don't stop.  
A hundred languages and as  
many steps down—  
Lombard Street.

Swirly colored letters adorn bright colored banners!  
Aged gray hairs once jet black long ago twirl to the music together!  
Scents of a hundred corners and fields, all come from one country, all come from one shop!  
Bustle! Commotion! Residents who most make the city alive, might be mistaken as foreign.

The Bridge is not orange, but silver and gray—through the evening fog.  
The Bridge is not tall, we can't see its top—through the evening clouds.  
The waves are fatally cold, lapping like mercury—along the sandy beach.



The wind doesn't bite, the breeze only howls—each finding their own frigid peace.