



UPWIND

from the Arcata Marsh

Interpretive Center

Vol 16, Issue 1, Winter 2010

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March 26 Deadline for Student Bird Art Contest Entries

For the seventh consecutive year, FOAM and Redwood Region Audubon Society are co-sponsoring a Student Bird Art Contest. \$500 in prizes will be awarded to students from kindergarten through high school who submit a drawing of one of 40 selected bird species. Special prize(s) will be awarded to the best depiction of birds in their natural habitat.

Entries will be judged by local wildlife artists and educators. Winners will be announced at the Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival on Saturday, April 17. Entries will be displayed at the Arcata Community Center during the Festival. Copies of winning artwork will be shown at the Interpretive Center during May.

Artwork may be in color or black and white. Any media may be used (e.g., crayons, pastels, paint, pencil, collage). Subject must be a rendering of bird(s) from a list of 40 species. One entry per person.

Flyers with complete rules are available at the Marsh Interpretive Center, Strictly for the Birds in Old Town Eureka, or by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to Louise Bacon-Ogden, 2337 B Street, Eureka 95501. Art-

work may be dropped off at Strictly for the Birds, 123 F Street, Eureka, or the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center, South G Street, Arcata, or mailed to Sue Leskiw at 5440 Cummings Road, Eureka 95503. Entries must be received by Friday, March 26 to be considered.



Spring Docent Training

On March 27 and 28, FOAM will sponsor training to prepare docents to lead Arcata Marsh tours and volunteers to staff the Interpretive Center. The classes will run from 9 am to 4 pm on Saturday and from 9 am to 3:30 pm on Sunday. Call the Interpretive Center at 707-826-2359 and leave your name, phone number, and e-mail if you are interested.

Topics will include inside lectures as well as outside walks, so dress accordingly. Bring rubber boots for specimen collecting in Bay mud. FOAM will provide morning bagels and drinks; lunch is on your own. Trainers will cover the following topics: tour tips and interpretation, Marsh history, plants, wastewater treatment, wetlands and invertebrates, and birds.



Marbled Godwit, by Carol Andersen

Help Needed with FOAM's Godwit Days Activities

The 15th annual Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival is just around the corner and, once again, FOAM will be sponsoring free family activities. The activities will be held in the Arts & Crafts room at the Arcata Community Center from 12:30 to 3:30 pm on Sat., April 17.

The activities span all ages and interests and will include making water cycle bracelets, peanut butter pinecone bird-feeders, and fish prints. All children must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

This is a fun event for both kids and volunteers. If you can spend a couple of hours helping kids discover the many wonders of our marsh, call Sue at 707-442-5444.

FOAM also needs volunteers to staff its table at the Bird Fair. Hours of operation are Friday 5-7 pm, Saturday, 10 am-5 pm, and Sunday 10 am-3 pm. If you can help hand out literature and sell items, call Janet at 707-822-4660.

As part of the Godwit Days program, FOAM board member David Couch will be leading a tour of the wastewater treatment plant on Saturday from 3-4:30 pm. The tour is offered at no charge, but pre-registration is required. Call Godwit Days at 707-826-7050 to sign up.

A complete schedule of events can be seen at www.godwitdays.com.

2009-10 Board of Directors & Officers

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President: Sue Leskiw (also UPWIND Editor; Mailing; Publicity; Exhibits; Scrapbook; Website) — 707-442-5444

Vice-President: Elliott Dabill (also Education; Computer) — 707-601-6068

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Volunteers Elliott Dabill and Ashleigh Newcomb show off the results of their labor. Photo by Sue Leskiw.

AmeriCorps, Board Members Turn Out for Workday

By Sue Leskiw

On October 24, over 30 people from the AmeriCorps Watershed Stewards, the "Creek Geeks," the HSU Natural Resources Club, the FOAM Board, and other local residents met at the first parking lot on South I Street to remove invasive fennel, Himalayaberry, and teasel. Thankfully, the morning was overcast, which kept the hard workers from overheating.

Dennis Houghton of Arcata's Environmental Services Department oversaw the operation, providing welcome bagels, as well as a gamut of tools such as loppers, shovels, and Pulaskis. Melissa Scott of AmeriCorps coordinated a delicious barbecue in the midst of a power outage at the Interpretive Center for all the volunteers on this nationwide Day of Caring.

Not all the tasks involved plant removal. Native grass and other seeds collected by volunteers recruited by FOAM habitat concerns chair Ken Burton were sown on Mount Trashmore.

FOAM and the City wish to thank the following people for spending their Saturday morning rehabilitating the Marsh: Mitra Abidi, Katy Allen, Leslie Ayala, Amy Balint, Alex Bruno, Matt Brush, Ken Burton, Jared Carillo, Sam Chaffee, Maria Comas, Gary Corsiglia, Elliott Dabill, Meredith deRoos, Kira Deschaux, Shalyn Eppler, Daniel Farber, David Finston, Matthew Hanington, Nathan Horning, Hannah Hourie, Jaclyn Inkster, Chiemi Lehner, Sue Leskiw, Tom Meyer, Jeremy Mills, Jon Mitscha, Ashleigh Newcomb, Rheannon Okey, Tim

Rushton, Jasmine Segura, and Nicole Serrano. We would also like to thank Terrence McNally for taking photographs that appeared in the *Arcata Eye*.

The next Marsh workday is expected to be July 24.

Aquatic Bird Monitoring

By Ken Burton

The Arcata Marsh has been selected as one of six Important Aquatic Bird Sites in northwestern California sites, to be included in the Oregon Coordinated Aquatic Bird Monitoring Program (OCABMP). The purposes of OCABMP are to create a cost-effective, coordinated aquatic bird monitoring effort and to meet the information needs of regional land managers and conservation organizations regarding aquatic ecosystem conservation through a network of partners.

FOAM was invited by the program leader, Klamath Bird Observatory (KBO), to write a site description for the Marsh. As FOAM's habitat concerns chair, I took the lead on the project and recruited David Fix, the lead author of FOAM's new bird checklist, and Julie Neander, the City's environmental program manager, to assist me. KBO's aquatic program staff toured the Marsh with us on January 12, then gave our team a brief presentation on OCABMP and how to produce a site description. A site description includes site boundaries, ownership, habitat mapping, historic and current surveys, potential survey methods, and suggested pilot studies. The description is nearly finalized and will be submitted shortly for inclusion in the OCABMP database.

Proposed Arcata Trail

By Katy Allen

Using a grant from the Coastal Conservancy, the City of Arcata is in the process of planning a "Class 1" trail. This means a year-round, all-weather trail with two-way traffic that could be used by pedestrians, bicyclists, and people in wheelchairs. The eventual goal is to have this section become part of the California Coastal Trail and link to the Annie & Mary Trail in Blue Lake and the Hammond Trail in McKinleyville.

In February, I attended a community "Rails to Trails" meeting, where consultants outlined a preferred trail alignment for most of the corridor, which runs from the Arcata Skatepark in the north to Bracut Lumber at the southern end. Be-

cause the North Coast Railroad Authority recently passed its own "Rail to Trail" guidelines, a feasibility and safety study will be undertaken to coordinate Arcata's proposed trail with a possible restored rail line. Most of the proposed trail runs parallel to existing rail lines. The edge of the trail is required to be at least 8.5 feet from the center of the railroad track at any given point.

Fencing will be required at many places along the trail; a split-rail type of fence is being proposed. At least three bridges will need to be built along the corridor: on Highway 101 over Gannon Slough and Jacoby Creek and one more over a levee.

Although a few areas remained where no preferred alternative has been selected, the trail generally will run (from the Skatepark) behind Arcata High School, along the east side of Shay Park, cross Alliance Road at M Street, follow the railroad tracks down L Street (making it a shared-use road for cars and trail users), cross Samoa Boulevard, follow the existing levee into the Arcata Marsh, cross over South I Street and then follow it, turn east on the existing wide trail

[continued on page 4]

Special Lectures Last October

In recognition of Coastweeks, FOAM sponsored three free lectures and one public forum. Attendance at the lectures averaged near 20, while 35 came to the *Spartina* Foun cosponsored with the City of Arcata. Three Board members - Bob Rasmussen, Ken Burton, and David Couch - coordinated the sessions.

HSU chemistry professor Matt Hurst kicked off the month with final results of his study of water samples from the Arcata Marsh and Humboldt Bay [see story, page 3]. Next came the forum on the Humboldt Bay Regional *Spartina* Eradication Project [see story, page 3].

Later in the month, Humboldt State graduate students Teresa Persons and Mary Burke presented on their research at the Marsh. Persons spoke on "Enhancement Marsh Water Quality Study," while Burke (who has received \$2000 in research funding from FOAM) enlightened us on "Evaluation of Biological Oxygen Demand and Total Suspended Solids in the Arcata Wastewater Treatment Plant." Finally, HSU graduate students Julie and Robert Koeppel and FOAM Board member David Couch provided an update on the Native Oyster Restoration research ongoing at the Marsh.

Marsh Metals

By Sue Leskiw

Final results of a study of water samples from the Arcata Marsh were presented by HSU chemistry professor Matt Hurst on October 8. Some 20 people attended the public lecture at the Interpretive Center on "The Removal and Speciation of Metals in the Arcata Marsh."

The data examined seasonal variation in levels of what Hurst termed dissolved "macronutrients" (nitrogen, phosphorus), "micronutrients/contaminants" (zinc, copper, cobalt, cadmium, nickel), and "contaminants" (lead). The five sampling sites were the primary effluent, treatment marsh outlet, oxidation pond outlet, Arcata Marsh outlet between Hauser Marsh and Klopp Lake, and the discharge point to Humboldt Bay.

Hurst physically separated metals into three fractions: particulate (large), colloidal, and soluble, with the latter two making up the dissolved percentage. He discovered that levels of some metals vary seasonally, depending on wind speed and direction and rain events.

Hurst found that the percent removal of contaminant metals by the Arcata Wastewater Treatment Plant compared well with conventional treatment facilities. The percent removal for Arcata's system was greater for copper, zinc, iron, cobalt, and lead and lower than conventional systems for nickel only.

FOAM Cosponsors *Spartina* Forum

By Ken Burton

In October, FOAM and the City of Arcata hosted a public forum on the invasive dense-flowered cordgrass, *Spartina densiflora*. In my role as FOAM's habitat concerns committee chair, I conceived and organized the event, held at the Arcata Community Center.

Four invited speakers each gave a presentation, followed by questions from the audience of about 35. Joel Gerwein of the California Coastal Conservancy opened the program with a presentation on threats posed by the plant and on local and regional eradication plans. Andrea Pickart from the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge then explained the Refuge's efforts to control the plant. Drew Kerr with the San Francisco Estuary Invasive *Spartina* Project related his agency's experience with control and eradication in San Francisco Bay. Adam Wagschal from the Humboldt Bay Har-

bor, Recreation, and Conservation District wrapped up with an explanation of the District's support of and role in the Humboldt Bay *Spartina* eradication planning process. Speakers and attendees both welcomed the opportunity to share information.

The 90-Minute Meander

By Mary Romaidis

I wanted to do something Thanksgiving morning just to get out of the house. I read in the North Coast Happenings section of the newspaper that there was going to be a 90-minute meander through the Arcata Marsh. And that's exactly what it was.

For someone who had never been to the Arcata Marsh, the 10th annual Thanksgiving morning walk was a wonderful introduction. Art Barab was the docent and led the walk for the 12 to 15 people that came. Art talked about the history of the marsh and its development from the late 1940s to the present. It was fascinating to hear about the how the different areas got their names, the wastewater treatment plant, and the old Arcata wharf and remains of the pier. Art also talked about the various wildlife at the Marsh and pointed out cinnamon teal, buffleheads, godwits, egrets, and a red-tailed hawk, to name a few birds.

It's amazing how the Marsh came about and all the work that has gone into creating this beautiful spot in Humboldt County. I will certainly go back and "meander" through some of the areas of the Marsh I did not see on Thanksgiving Day. The meander was very informative and shows that Humboldt County has something to be proud of and thankful for.

New Year's Day Ramble

By Jenny Hanson

As New Year's Day arrived with turbulent grey skies and heavy showers, it seemed unlikely that people would welcome a nature ramble in the early afternoon. But the rain stopped as I set up my scope at Klopp Lake, and soon there were about 14 nature enthusiasts gathered around. We started by enjoying the aerial bird-show put on by swirling flocks of godwits and avocets, then went on to talk about the reasons that so many birds spend their winters here.

Among the topics that came up during our stroll was the significance of the enhancement marshes to wastewater treatment. At Allen Marsh, we examined the long roots of the marsh pennywort and its role in taking up excess nutrients from the water. Along the way, we compared fresh and salt marsh vegetation, enjoying freshwater cattails at No-Name Pond, then examining salty red pickle-weed.

The final leg of our walk took us around the newly excavated pond and marshland. We got a good leg-stretch as a cold wind blew up and we found ourselves under a rain cloud. Pulling on our raingear, we completed our trip at a fast pace. From exploratory ramble to foul-weather run, it was an enjoyable way to welcome in the New Year.



New I Street Boat Dock

Last November, the City of Arcata installed a new floating dock for non-motorized watercraft launching from the Klopp Lake parking lot. FOAM contributed \$2000 toward purchase of the dock. Additional funding came from the City of Arcata; the Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation & Conservation District; and the Mel and Grace McLean Foundation. A plaque recognizing the donors is mounted near the structure.

NEEDED: One member to serve a 3-year term on the FOAM Board of Directors. Join a great group of people who care about the Marsh. Call President Sue Leskiw at 707-442-5444 to find out more!

Seasons Around the Marsh – Winter

By Denise Homer

It's a deeply foggy morning. The fog catches on the spider webs, illuminating them. Suddenly, there are webs everywhere. Before I can get to the door, two visitors stop to inquire about what kind of spider has made the webs. They had been in Florida, where the Golden Orb Spider weaves its huge web across the paths and the rangers then close the trails. Our local answer is not so simple. We have several different species. Spiders are not my specialty, so I think it's a Holly kind of morning. Holly Gibson loved spiders and, as a volunteer here, she taught me about them. I'm thinking I should have listened better. So, I do the best I can and point out the various types webs we can see. The visitors catch on quick and find an orb web.

Argiope is an orb web builder I see around the Interpretive Center. It holds its eight legs together in twos, creating an X on the web.

If you see an orb web with two sectors missing, looking like a pizza with a single piece missing, that's a *Zygiella x-notata*.

If you see a flat sheet under which spiders hang, those are Monkey Spiders.

Spiders make silk from glands in their abdomen. This silk is one of the strongest natural fibers, which may account for its popular use by birds in nest building.

Have you looked a spider in the eye? Most spiders have eight eyes in two rows of four each. But some have six and they're not always in two rows.

Like Holly, Robert the Bruce, a king of Scotland, took inspiration from a spider. The king of England was at war with him. After being defeated in battle, Bruce escaped and hid out in a cave for three months. He was at the lowest point of his life. While waiting, he watched a spider trying to build a web across the cave entrance. Six times, the spider tried to throw its web from one side of the cave to the other. Six times, the thread fell short. But the spider did not lose hope. On the seventh try, the thread was carried safely to the other side of the cave wall and fastened there. This inspired Robert to try again, and to this day, the victory and independence of Scotland is traced to a spider that kept trying again and again to spin its web in a cave and inspired the Scottish king.



PLANTS OF THE MARSH A SERIES BY MELINDA BAILEY

Sitka Spruce (*Picea sitchensis*)

In the winter here, if you are looking for a botanical wonder, you always can explore the conifers. Conifers belong to a group of plants known as the gymnosperms, which means "naked seed." Their seeds are produced on the surface of a cone scale instead of within an embryonic sac as are true flowering plants. Some people call all conifers "pines"; however, pines are just one group within this class of plants.

Six different species of conifers live at the Arcata Marsh: Beach Pine, Monterey Pine, Coast Redwood, Douglas-Fir, Port Orford Cedar, and Sitka Spruce. All conifers produce needles and cones. Although not all conifers are evergreen, all of the ones found here are. No other conifer can tolerate wet feet as well as Sitka Spruce – so, it is only fitting during our recent deluge of rain that we remark on this tree.

Sitka Spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) is the quintessential tree of the temperate rainforest. It is restricted to a maritime climate (cool and wet), found in a narrow strip along the Pacific Coast from 61 degrees N latitude to 39 degrees N latitude. This puts Humboldt near the southern end of its range. Its name comes from Sitka, Alaska, which commonly received at least 80 inches of rain annually. This tree — the world's largest spruce — is the state tree of Alaska. In old-growth stands, it commonly reaches heights of 70 meters (230 feet) and has a diameter of 300 centimeters (9.8 feet). The largest known specimen by volume grows in Washington's Olympic National Park. In 2001, it measured 75.6 m (248 ft) in height and 455 cm (14.9 ft) in diameter. The tallest specimen on record grows in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park,

reaching a height of 96.7 m (317 ft). It prefers to grow in mixed stands of conifers and is commonly associated with Western Hemlock.

Sitka Spruce generally grows straight and tall, but old crowns can be branched. The bark of mature trees is flaky, with purplish-gray scales. The cones are light in color, thin, papery and about three inches long. Whereas pines have long needles that come in clusters, spruce needles are short, squared, and grow evenly distributed along branches. Sitka Spruce needles are green, about one inch long, sharply pointed, and flat. One way you can tell this tree from other conifers is to grab the needles carefully. If they are sharp and hurt your hand, you have identified a Sitka Spruce. Another way to remember this tree is through the little jingle "stickery sitchensis." The sharp needles were believed to give special powers of protection against evil thoughts to the trees, according to some legends; however, certainly not against the sharp blade of a chainsaw! Wood from this tree is lightweight yet strong and has been prized by many. Large trees have been cut down for lumber, plywood, and pulp. Craftsmen have used the wood for boats, musical instruments, and aircraft.

At the Arcata Marsh, a few trees have been planted by the entrance to the interpretive center and others can be found on the edges of Mt. Trashmore. Of course, to see this tree in its true glory, one should visit the parks further north.

[Trail, continued from page 2]

below Mt. Trashmore, cross at the Jolly Giant Creek bridge, skirt the wastewater treatment plant, and follow the tracks on South G Street, cross to the east side of the tracks near the end of South G, cross Jacoby Creek on a new CalTrans-built bridge, then continue on the east side of the tracks to Bracut.

In response to my question about trail width, the consultant replied that the section through the Marsh would probably be 10- to 12-foot-wide pavement with 2-foot shoulder on each side. The City is considering using a specialized surface that would slow bicyclists down a bit. (At a previous City-sponsored meeting in December 2009, I had expressed FOAM's concern that a faster-paced, "commuter bike"-type trail could interfere with slower-paced, bird-watching types who might be standing still for up to 20 minutes looking through a spotting scope.)

Engineering design is expected to be completed in spring 2010.



**MARCH ARTIST
SUSAN BORNSTEIN**

I grew up in the Midwest, have lived on both coasts, and moved to Arcata in 1983. I have worked as a professional artist for over 25 years. My work has been shown in solo and group exhibits throughout northern California; my paintings are owned by private collectors throughout the United States.

Susan earned her BFA degree from Washington University in St Louis and her MFA from Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore.

My work is based on what I see in my own neighborhood, the gardens and yards of friends, or other immediate and familiar locations. I take great pleasure in finding unexpected combinations of colors, textures, and shapes in my everyday experience of the world. To me, the artist's role is to notice, to take the time to see, to feel, and to respond. Currently, I am painting with acrylics on paper.

New Bird Checklist on Sale

Recently, FOAM published a new and improved checklist of bird species historically seen at the Arcata Marsh & Wildlife Sanctuary. The new list - updated by David Fix and Rob Fowler --- adds quite a few species known to have occurred (to total over 300) and denotes those that have bred at the Marsh. The birds' seasonal abundance has also been adjusted, based on published and confirmable records. The checklist, printed on card stock to make it more durable, is for sale in the Interpretive Center bookstore for 75 cents.

**APRIL ARTISTS
MIKE & LESLIE ANDERSON**

The April show at the Marsh will be "Wetland Wings: an exhibit of photographs and drawings of the avian (and other) occupants of the Arcata Marsh," featuring photographs by Charles M (Mike) Anderson and photos and drawings by Leslie Scopes Anderson.

Arcata residents Mike (HSU environmental resources engineering professor) and Leslie (graphic designer) are life-long nature lovers and recent digital wildlife photographers. They thoroughly enjoy their adventures in the outdoors. The many hours spent waiting to capture just the right moment instill in us a deep respect for the awe-inspiring wonders of the natural world.



Great Blue Heron, by Mike Anderson

Science Fair Award

For the fifth year, FOAM is sponsoring an award at the Humboldt County Science Fair for the best project related to wetlands. The event will be held the week of March 15 at Humboldt State University. FOAM volunteer judges will evaluate exhibits created by elementary, middle, and high school students to choose a winner of \$50.



Marsh Wren, by Leslie Anderson

Visitor Log

The Interpretive Center had 1769 walk-in visitors during September, 1937 in October, 1929 in November, 1659 in December, and 1009 in January.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

[Docent tours leave the Interpretive Center each Saturday at 2 pm; wastewater tour last Saturday of each month]

- March --- art by Susan Bornstein
- March 12 --- FOAM Board Meeting, 6:30-8:30 pm
- March 27-28 --- FOAM Docent Training (see page 1)
- April --- photos by Mike Anderson; drawings and photos by Leslie Anderson
- April 11 --- FOAM Board Meeting, 6:30-8:30 pm
- April 16-18 --- 15th Annual Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival
- May --- Winning artwork from Student Bird Art Competition (see page 1)
- May 13 --- FOAM Board Meeting, 6:30-8:30 pm

Recognition & Thanks, October 2009-February 2010

- **Best Friends** (\$100): Barbara Barratt; Chris Froelking & Margaret Nulsen; Ron & Melanie Johnson; The Pearsons; Catherine Walling
- **Sponsors** (\$50): Fred Ferguson; Fred Hummel; David Ledger (Redding); Frances Madrone & Patric Nagle; Marian Perry
- **Friends:** Lee & Claude Albright; George & Beverly Allen; Thea Gast; Lilyan Haigh; Deborah Kearns (San Francisco); Ellen Mahoney & Luther Cobb; Audrey Miller; Sue & Archie Mossman; Chet & Barbara Ogan; Bev Post; Jean Santi; Lance Torgerson; Richard Vincent; Lucille Vinyard; Jane Wilson; Connie Word (Redding); Janet & Art Zich
- **Special Donors:** Calista Sullivan & Charles Sanborn, \$1000; Ryan Sexton & Family (Muncie, IN), \$300; Chris & Lee House (through BMW House Foundation), \$300; Milton Boyd, \$100 (in gratitude for Marsh docents Katy Allen, Elliott Dabill, Jenny Hansen, Rich Ridenhour, Alex Stillman, and Richard Vincent, who led tours for HSU Biology 105 classes)