



# UPWIND

from the Arcata Marsh  
Interpretive Center  
Vol 27, Issue 1, Winter 2019/20

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**Our Mission: To stimulate understanding of the Arcata Marsh & Wildlife Sanctuary, its relationship with Arcata's integrated wastewater treatment system, the surrounding watersheds and bay, and their link with the Earth's water cycle**

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*In This Issue: Upcoming Lectures... Student Bird Art Contest... Godwit Days Silver Anniversary... Godwit Days Help Sought... Avian Scientific Names... What's New at the Marsh... Holiday Tours... King Tide Tour... Doggy News... Otter Art Lecture... Clam Lecture... Weasel Lecture... Amanita Lecture... Visitor Log... Artists... Calendar... Members & Donors*

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*Pete Haggard in the "Bee Lab"  
(Room 149, Dr. Mesler's room for his  
pollination biology graduate students).*

## Upcoming Lectures

On Friday, February 21, Pete Haggard will enlighten us about his several years of volunteer work to create a native plant garden in front of the Interpretive Center. The focus of the garden is coastal habitat species, using plants naturally there, donations from Lost Foods at Redwood Acres, and specimens from Pete's personal garden in Fieldbrook. According to former City naturalist Gretchen O'Brien, Pete was involved in the conceptual meeting to create the garden, held in spring 2017, and the effort started with the two of them removing non-native plants from the area. Pete will discuss the species of plants there and what critters they attract. He and his wife Judy authored a field guide to insects of the Pacific Northwest (sold in AMIC). He maintains two other public gardens as a volunteer. FOAM gave him a special shout-out at its 2018 and 2019 annual meetings for his gardening efforts.

On Friday, March 20, HSU biology professor Sean Craig will speak about anaerobic and aerobic life in the Bay mud.

There will be no FOAM lecture in April, to avoid conflict with Godwit Days (see page 2).

Seating is available on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information, call (707) 826-2359.

## March 20 Deadline for Student Bird Art Contest

For the 17th year, FOAM and Redwood Region Audubon Society are co-sponsoring a Student Bird Art Contest in conjunction with Godwit Days. At least \$550 in prizes will be awarded to Humboldt County students from kindergarten through high school who submit a drawing of one of 40 suggested species or another common local bird. Prizes also

will be awarded for the best rendition of a bird in its natural habitat.

Awards will be presented at the Silver Anniversary Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival on Saturday, April 18 at 10:30 am. All entries will be displayed at the Arcata Community Center during the Festival and copies of cash-prize-winning artwork will be shown at AMIC during May and June.

A flyer with complete rules is posted on the FOAM website or can be picked up at the Interpretive Center. Flyers have been mailed to all Humboldt County schools.

Art may be dropped off at the Interpretive Center, 569 South G St, or mailed to Sue Leskiw, 155 Kara Ln, McKinleyville CA 95519. Entries must be received by Friday, March 20 to be considered.

Questions? E-mail [sueleskiw1@gmail.com](mailto:sueleskiw1@gmail.com).

## 2019-20 Board of Directors & Officers

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Dr. Richard Prum.

## Silver Anniversary for Arcata Bird Festival

By Sue Leskiw

The 25th Annual Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival happens April 17 to 19 at the Arcata Community Center. (Pre- and post-festival events extend the core dates from April 15 to 21.)

The next article describes FOAM's continued involvement with Godwit Days: student bird art contest, family nature crafts, and informational booth. But this year, FOAM—the only nonprofit group to be selected twice as the festival's Spotlight Organization—stepped up its support when Godwit Days asked us to underwrite \$500 of the cost of the Saturday night keynote lecturer. The Board decided to sponsor Dr. Richard Prum, Yale University professor and author of *The Evolution of Beauty: How Darwin's Forgotten Theory of Mate Choice Shapes the Animal World—and Us*.

His book, named Best Book of 2017 by the New York Times, Smithsonian, and the Wall Street Journal and a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, is “a major reimagining of how evolutionary forces work, revealing how mating preferences—what Charles Darwin termed the ‘taste for the beautiful’—create the extraordinary range of ornament in the animal

world.” The book is about the power of aesthetic mate choice, arguing it to be an important independent agent in evolution.

FOAM president Elliott Dabill had listened to *The Evolution of Beauty* twice via audiobook, then purchased the 475-page printed version so that he could devise a class about it for OLLI (the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute) at HSU. Elliott's enthusiasm for the book made Godwit Day's request for support a happy coincidence. He is eagerly anticipating attending Dr. Prum's keynote on April 18.

I encourage FOAM members and volunteers to register for their choice of the nearly 90 offerings—field trips, workshops, and lectures—that make up this year's festival. It's a common misperception that Godwit Days is run by the local Audubon chapter or by the City of Arcata, but the reality is that the festival is its own nonprofit organization that has no other pot of money to operate other than what it takes in each year from registrants, sponsors, and vendor fees.

Please visit [www.godwitdays.org](http://www.godwitdays.org) to review the event schedule and online registration form, before trips fill up. Registration also can be done by phone at (707) 826-7050 or 1-800-908-WING (9464).

## Help Needed with FOAM's Godwit Days Activities

The Silver Anniversary Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival is just around the corner and FOAM will again be hosting free family nature craft activities. The drop-in session will be held in the Arcata Community Center on Saturday, April 18, from 11 am to 1 pm. Planned activities include Marsh critter ornaments, bird hats, bird masks, painted bird rocks, wooden bird calls, and toilet paper tube owls. All children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. If you can spend a couple of hours helping kids discover the many wonders of our Marsh, contact Sue at [sueleskiw1@gmail.com](mailto:sueleskiw1@gmail.com).

FOAM also needs staffers for its table at the Bird Fair. Hours of operation are Friday 3-7 pm, Satur-

day 10 am-5 pm (optional 5-7:30 pm shift), and Sunday 10 am-3 pm, divided into 2- or 3-hour shifts. If you can help hand out literature and sell items, email [sueleskiw1@gmail.com](mailto:sueleskiw1@gmail.com).

Another volunteer opportunity is helping to hang the hundreds of entries received in the 17th Annual Student Bird Art Contest, co-sponsored by FOAM and Redwood Region Audubon Society. This will occur on Friday, April 17 starting at 1 pm. Bring a light-weight hammer and be prepared to push-pin artwork along the hallways and lobby of the Community Center. Contact Sue at [sueleskiw1@gmail.com](mailto:sueleskiw1@gmail.com).

## Scientific Names of Birds

By Sue Leskiw

Quite a few years ago, I bought the book, *Latin for Bird Lovers*, in the expectation that I could use it as a recurring source for interesting avian tidbits in UPWIND. This is the first time that I've had a big enough blank space in the newsletter to crack the volume open!

A bit of nomenclature background. The binomial (double name) system for naming all living things was created by Swedish physician, botanist, and zoologist Carl Linnaeus. Each organism is given a unique scientific name that consists of a genus and species. Where do these names come from? Most derive from Latin or Greek and occasionally other languages. They often stem from names of people, places, or descriptions of color, shape, or behavior.

Following is a breakdown of some randomly selected names of local birds, for your edification.

► Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*), “love of lonely places in the mountains.”

► Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*), from Greek for “bald” and “raven” and Latin for “long-eared or attentive/nosey.”

► Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), from Latin for “curved blade or sickle” and “wanderer.”

► Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*), from Greek for “ox” and Latin for “head” and [language not listed] “white.”

(continued on page 3)



► Rufous Hummingbird (*Seiurus rufus*), from Greek for “light” and “bearing” and well, rufus is reddish!

► Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*), from Greek for “crest” and “diver” [cucullatus not in book].

► And what about FOAM’s signature species, the Marsh Wren? *Cistothorus platensis*, from Greek for “shrub” and “a bed” [platensis not in book].

## What’s New at the Marsh

By George Ziminsky

► Winter has been a busy season at the Marsh. While the rain might have kept some folks away, King Tides and exciting birds brought many out to the Marsh. The Interpretive Center is a great place to spend some time on a rainy day, especially for budding naturalists to explore our reading area.

► The bookstore has FOAM tote bags back in stock, wide-brim hats with the AMWS Blue Heron logo, t-shirts, hoodies, and books for all ages.

► A Worm-eating Warbler has been calling the Marsh home since November 22, and seven Trumpeter Swans paid a very brief visit a week later. Both were first-time records here, bringing the Marsh species list to 337! Thanks to keen observations by several HSU students, we had four owl species (Western Screech, Northern Saw-whet, Barred, and Barn) recorded over four days in January!

► Pete Haggard has been continuing his work in the native plant garden in front of the Interpretive Center, taking advantage of the wet weather to plant and seed new material. Pete will be talking about the garden during the February 21 FOAM monthly lecture (see page 1).

► A workday on January 26 with the Volunteer Trail Stewards (VTS) was well attended, despite the threatening forecast. A huge thank you to VTS and HSU’s Natural Resources Club! We were able to take out several invasive plant species along the Humboldt Bay Trail and open up views by the Oxy Ponds.



Some of the Thanksgiving Day walk attendees. All photos this page by Tom Leskiw.

## Two out of Three Ain’t Bad (Weatherwise)

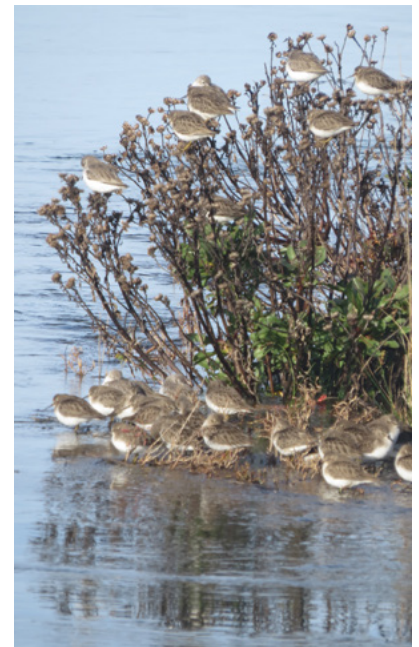
By Sue Leskiw

This year, FOAM offered three special holiday Marsh tours: Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day. We lucked out on the first two, with windless and relatively warm weather conditions.

On November 28, docents Alex Stillman and Jenny Hanson led a group of nearly 20 people on a walk that focused on plant identification and Marsh history. Participant Tom Leskiw provided an added bonus of bird identification skills to the experience.

On December 25, around 25 people dropped by to experience birding with Ken Burton and history from Alex Stillman. It started with a fast-paced walk out to the breached levee on McDaniel Slough to view birds at high tide. One unusual avian sight, attested to by Ken and attendee Tom Leskiw, was a group of sandpipers perched in a bush.

Unfortunately, the perfect weather didn’t hold for the New Year’s Day tour with Lynn Jones and Alexa DeJoannis. Lynn reports that they had “five intrepid participants and three dogs on a drippy day.”



Sandpipers in a bush.



(From left) Leaders Ken Burton and Alex Stillman with Christmas Day walkers.





*The gang of 70-plus on the January 11 King Tide tour. Photo by Elliott Dabill.*

## King Tide Tour

*By Sue Leskiw*

When FOAM president Elliott Dabill was planning his third annual King Tide Tour on January 11, little did he dream that over 70 people would join him. (I heard from several people who left before the tour started because it was too crowded or parking was maxed out!) His special tour was featured on the front page of the Sunday Times-Standard and engendered an article in the North Coast Journal.

Rain was threatening during the mid-day hike out to the saltwater marshes west of South I Street, but the weather didn't dampen the spirits of the participants. FOAM secretary Katy Allen called Elliott a "Pied Piper" because he started out with 45 attendees and ended up with over 70. (Usually, tour attendance goes in the opposite direction!)

Elliott expounded on the science behind what makes these tides so much higher than normal; the increases expected as sea level rises; and what will happen to Humboldt Bay as the rest of the century brings monumental changes to our home. He brought along maps that showed zones within Arcata that will be underwater later this century due to sea level rise.



*A line of umbrellas crosses the levee. Photo by Katy Allen.*

## Doggy News

By Cindy Kuttner

In spring 2019, Breckenridge (CO) had to detoxify its dog park due to dangerously high levels of dog poop bacteria. After the snow melted, the area was scraped clean and re-sodded. This winter, dogs and owners are once again enjoying socializing and romping in the snowy dog park.

The third-grade class at Breckenridge Elementary School wrote persuasive essays in November. Maybe our granddaughter's essay reproduced below educated dog owners and they will keep their dog park clean this season!

### *Dog Poop by Bergen Doran*

Have you every stepped in a pile of dog poop? The problem is that dog owners are not picking up after their dogs go poop. Responsible citizens must pick up after their dog so that Breckenridge can be a clean and healthy town.

Dog poop is a problem because it can carry diseases. Diseases and other sicknesses carry germs and germs can spread and make people and animals sick. When you don't pick up your dog poop, germs spread and make people sick. Owners need to pick up their dog poop so that diseases don't spread.

Dog poop left on trails is yucky and bad for the environment. Poop left on trails can pollute the trails and water. Dog poop left on trails is gross to other people. Dog owners should pick up poop so that people can enjoy the trails.

My solution is to educate dog owners to let them know why it is important to pick up after their dogs. I suggest the town should put signs at the trail heads to tell how bad dog poop is. Maybe the town could put bag stations along the trail. Dog poop is disgusting and dangerous so it should be picked up so that the trails are healthy and beautiful.

We caretakers and lovers of the Arcata Marsh have learned to curb our dogs on the trails. But there are still are some yucky and disgusting piles that are not picked up. We do have signs and doggy bags and trash

cans strategically placed throughout the Marsh. This is a reminder from grownups and kids, near and far, to keep our Marsh clean and beautiful.

## Otter Art & Science

By Elliott Dabill

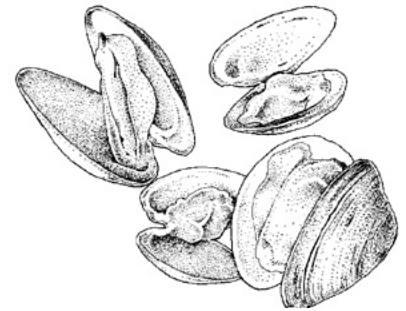
We can't seem to help our attachment to the sweet faces of otters. They are an advertiser's dream and their pups will induce a crowd to "aww" spontaneously. Otters play a keystone role in the environment. But humans almost killed them all, both sea and river species.

HSU wildlife professor Jeff Black returned on August 16 to update us about his North Coast Otters project. When he was vacationing in England, his eye was caught by a program selling unique otter sculptures to raise money for otter recovery. Jeff told us about progress on his regional version of the British plan, which he organized to raise funds to study otters and support student projects and theses in the wildlife department. With small populations recovering slowly, you want to look for ways to help, says Black.

The current status: 100 blank, 3-foot-tall sculptures have been purchased and have arrived. Jeff has invited artists to propose their unique schemes for decorating the sculptures, and that work will begin soon. In summer 2020, the following steps will conclude the fun, the art, and the fundraising: by June, sponsors will have donated \$750 for each otter (already over 60 purchased). Each host site will pay \$500 per otter for them to be displayed. (Katy and Tom Allen sponsored the otter to be displayed at the Interpretive Center; FOAM paid to host that otter.)

Visitors from the Bay Area, Mendocino, Humboldt, and other counties will drive to the otter locations to record the visit on a guidebook list and will have the option to bid in an ongoing auction for the beast of their choice. At the end of September, 30 otters will be auctioned at a live event. Associated programs for kids will include making paper mache otters and attending an eco-day.

To view some of the arty otters, go to [www.otterart.humboldt.edu](http://www.otterart.humboldt.edu). (P.S. I hope we get to display the otter with binoculars around its neck!)



## Clams & Other Bivalves

By Elliott Dabill

John DeMartini returned on September 20 to enlighten us on a new topic: clams and other bivalves. The word bivalve means an animal with two valves, or shells, like a clam. For this article, it can also divide the world into words of science as half an animal's story, then provide more down-to-earth meaning for the remainder.

A clam is related to other animals by phylum (Mollusca) and class pelecypods, from the Greek describing "a foot shaped like an axe." The other approach might just say that they are related to squishy things like octopi (really), since they are both mollusks.

John brought lots of examples, like gapers, razors, and cockles, all aligned anatomically by their posterior (the hinge), anterior (where the fleshy foot sticks out), and left- and right-sided shells. Test yourself by picking up a shell and figuring out which side it represents. The inside is organized around food: a siphon tube brings in water, which drifts over the gills, where cilia direct the food particles toward the mouth. The largest section is devoted to digestive organs, then waste is pushed out the excurrent siphon.

That's the science, but a bivalvular view could also say that the guts taste good raw and the purpose of a bivalve is to filter water. Imagine the water around New York City be

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ing so cleaned by clams that a thriving industry existed way back when. We have that industry now, as most of California's clams are raised commercially in the clean waters of Humboldt Bay.

They get mushy in late summer, so eat them before their glands prepare for spring sex. Those are the basics, John explained, but dive into the details and you can see adaptations to sandy beaches (razor clams), rocky shores (mussels), or the monsters three feet deep in the mud that grow huge siphons to handle the water (geoduck).

John has taught us many times over the years because he knows so much biology and enjoys telling others about it. If most of the world is now too separated from nature, we like to call on John for a science fix and share the feast of words while dreaming of the feast between the valves.

## Local Weasel Family Members

By Elliott Dabill

Phil Johnston is the mountain lion biologist for the Hoopa Valley Tribe, but he returned to the Interpretive Center on October 18 to remind us of the madness that are mustelids: weasels, otters, badgers, mink, etc. These hunters are amped up, with the high metabolism that powers their typically long, skinny bodies up hills and trees, into burrows and tunnels, and wherever they need to get quickly to feed that way of life. They hunt usually by search-and-destroy: active searching, stalking, and ambushing. They have a short awareness range but don't seem hindered by it, since a fisher or weasel can eat 20 voles in an hour. By the way, that inchworm style of running may look awkward, but it's an efficient way to get around.

American badgers prefer more open country than weasels, where they can get into burrows and hunt prairie dogs and other prey. There are only 5% of them left from the time before farmland took over their habitat.

A similar catastrophic decline hit the sea otters, but more directly, as humans wanted to take advantage of their most intensely packed fur for our own uses. Their fecundity is low and they don't disperse to new territories quickly, so our unplanned experiment taught humans the meaning of keystone species. When the otters disappeared, their food (sea urchins) increased rapidly and their food (kelp) began to decline. There are now urchin deserts in places formerly lush with kelp forests.

There is a lot to like about the mustelids: their high-energy habits hint for us at a life at twice the normal speed. Phil is just as good at storytelling and sharing his infectious attachment to the animals.

## The Amanita Before Christmas

By Elliott Dabill

Former FOAM Board member and current College of the Redwoods professor Maria (Friedman) Morrow has a fervent fondness for fungi. During her December 20 presentation at the Interpretive Center, she set up a table with several varieties, like gigantic bolete varieties and the eponymous *Amanita muscaria*, six of them, which we all discussed for a while.

*Amanita* mushrooms are poisonous, but not too much; you might get a little wacky from eating a bit of them. Even that toxicity can be moderated, as the serial boiling technique (boil it, cool it, boil it) will cause the skin to fall off of the cap and declare itself harmless for eating. Yes, you can eat the infamous *Amanita*, but nobody wants you to go experimenting with it. Reindeer eat *Amanita* and the same effects of muscle jerks, drowsiness, and some apparent euphoria are present.

The discussion led to the newish science of what the mushrooms do (reproduction) and what the main body of the fungi are up to underground: connecting tree roots to water and minerals, and receiving from the tree the sugars produced by photosynthesis. There is a lot more go-



ing on down there than we knew before the last few decades.

Speaking of cool interactions, the evening ended when Maria, dressed in her *Amanita* top (red with white polka dots), read her poem from the title of the talk. Mimicking "The Night Before Christmas," she walked us through "Twas the night of the solstice, and all through the forest...". Is it possible that the origin of the Christmas tree and presents parallels what goes on out there with mushrooms popping up under trees in the forest? Maria's recitation was fun, highlighted fungus biology, and left us all with a combination of holiday spirit and renewed interest in mutualism.

## Visitor Log

One can tell it's winter at the Marsh, as the number of international and out-of-state visitors who signed the front desk logbook was much reduced from our last newsletter. International visitors hailed from Chile, Colombia, Spain, and the United Kingdom, while non-California people traveled from Colorado, Florida, Iowa, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, and Virginia.

Heartening comments about our Marsh continued to be penned: "Thank you for being open. Absolutely fabulous... So nice to return 25 years later... Love the kids' stuff... Thanks for tour. It was informational!... What a wonderful place! Thank you... Lovely little spot! My dog approves!... Great exhibits, thanks!... Fabulous... Very interesting... Pretty! I like the birds!... Glorious... Fun... Awesome... Beautiful day with family... Got to love those birds!... Great as always... Wow!... Outstanding and inspiring... Very friendly and educational... Far better than I expected and I knew it would be great!... Top 5!"





*American Avocets by Leslie Scopes Anderson.*

### **MARCH/APRIL ARTISTS MIKE ANDERSON & LESLIE SCOPES ANDERSON**

Award-winning photographers Mike Anderson and Leslie Scopes Anderson will present an exhibit "Birds of Humboldt County" at the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center. The show features images of our spectacular local birds in their natural habitats.

Mike and Leslie have been photographing birds for more than a dozen years. Leslie is a life-long nature lover and professional graphic designer. Mike is an outdoor enthusiast and HSU emeritus professor of Environmental Resources Engineering. Together, they began photographing egrets and night-herons at the Arcata Marsh and a new passion was born!

"Few things are as satisfying as spending hours out in nature, waiting for that perfect pose or lighting effect," says Leslie. The two of them share the dedication and extreme patience required to catch just the right image in the field. Their interest has taken them to other countries and many parts of the US in search of new, fascinating subjects.

"We hope our photographs inspire viewers to appreciate nature's beauty," Mike states.

Their work has been recognized by National Geographic, Nature's Best Photography, Audubon, the Nature Conservancy, California's Wildlife Photo of the Year, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and others.

## **Calendar of Events**

*[Docent tours leave the Interpretive Center every Saturday at 2 pm]*

February—wildlife artwork by Gary Bloomfield

February 13—FOAM Board meeting, 6:30-8 pm

February 21—Interpretive Center native plant garden lecture by Pete Haggard, 7:30 pm (see page 1)

March/April—Humboldt County bird photographs by Mike Anderson & Leslie Scopes Anderson

March 12—FOAM Board meeting, 6:30-8 pm

March 20—Anaerobic and aerobic life in the Bay mud lecture by Sean Craig, 7:30 pm (see page 1)

March 20—Student Bird Art Contest deadline (see page 1)

April 9—FOAM Board meeting, 6:30-8 pm

April 18—FOAM family nature crafts at Godwit Days, Arcata Community Center (see page 2)

May/June—display of winners of 17th Annual Student Bird Art Contest, sponsored by FOAM and RRAS

May 14—FOAM Board meeting, 6:30-8 pm



## **Thanks to Our Supporters, mid-November 2019 through January 2020**

► Best Friends (\$100+): Ira Blatt & Debbe Hartridge, \$300 (new Life Members); Christopher & Kathleen Lee, \$200\*

► Sponsors (\$50-99): Lorraine Dillon & Mike Metro; Audrey Miller; Valgene Phillips & Joan Sikkens; George Waller

► Friends (\$18-49): Gail Coonen; Francis & Frances Ferguson; Mary Ann Madej & Alan Wolski; Maggie & Heal McKnight; Keith Mobbs (Brisbane); Christine O'Kelly & Johnny Newsome; Cynthia Rudick (Canton, OH); April Small; Ellen Weiss & Nathan Copple; Katie White

► Donations: FOAM received an outpouring of donations from the following Life Members—Maria Baron, \$1000; Linda Rogers (Pullman, WA; "Thanks for all you do for conservation, preservation, education"), \$400; Susan Hansen, \$250; Calista Sullivan, \$250; Ronald & Melanie Johnson, \$200; Jean Santi & Whitney Buck, \$150; Paula Dawson (Mill Valley), \$100; Aldaron Laird, \$100; Richard & Carol Laursen (Carmichael; "Continue the good work. We've got your back"), \$100; Steven & Carol Pearson (Portland, OR), \$100. Donations from non-Life Members were Karen Isa, \$100; Janyce Neiman, \$25, in honor of the Cook family (Eastford, CT). AMIC donation box, \$40. \* = New member

**25th Annual Godwit Days  
April 15 through 21  
Arcata Community Center  
[www.godwitdays.org](http://www.godwitdays.org)**



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**Mark Your Calendar for:**

**Native Plant Garden Lecture, 2/21**

**Life in the Bay Mud Lecture, 3/20**

**Student Bird Art Contest Deadline, 3/20**

**FOAM Nature Crafts at Godwit Days, 4/18**

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**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**



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Please check the appropriate membership category:

☐ Individual \$25      ☐ Family \$35      ☐ Student/Senior \$18

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☐ I would like more information about volunteering for FOAM,

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*If you are receiving a complimentary copy of this newsletter, please consider joining FOAM.*

*If you were a member, but have allowed your membership to lapse, please renew.*

*(See mailing label for your expiration date.)*

*Interpretive Center street address is 569 South G Street, Arcata.*

*FOAM mailing address is PO Box 410, Arcata CA 95518. You can reach us by phone from 9 am to 5 pm Tuesday through Sunday and 1 to 5 pm Monday at 707-826-2359.*