



UPWIND

from the Arcata Marsh
Interpretive Center
Vol 27, Issue 3, Fall 2020

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

In This Issue: Upcoming Lectures... Annual Meeting... Marsh Poop Pickup... Arcata Marsh Bird(s) of the Year... What's New at the Marsh... Native Plant Lecture... Annual Report... Wiyot Lecture... Calendar... Supporters

Upcoming Lectures

On Friday, October 16, join local historian Jerry Rohde for a Zoom presentation entitled "Twice as Many Wharves." His session will acquaint you with the "Shingle" Wharf into Arcata Bay, which ignited in 1900 with 4 million shingles and a train on top of it, as well as touch on the Bay dredge "Jupiter" and why there was never a "McDaniels" Slough.

On Friday, November 20, HSU biology professor and FOAM Board member Mark Wilson will enlighten you about "The Natural History of Microorganisms." His talk will focus on the methods that scientists use to study complex communities of bacteria, which are so small that hundreds of billions of individuals can fit in the area of an ice cube.

On Friday, January 15, HSU wildlife student Jaime Carlino will speak on "Rat Poison Is Wildlife Poison." Founder of the Humboldt chapter of the nonprofit organization, Raptors Are the Solution (RATS), she will cover the effects of rodenticides on non-target species and provide information on how to manage rodent issues without using poisons.

FOAM members, volunteers, and past lecture attendees for whom we have an email will be sent a link to the Zoom meeting prior to each event. FOAM also plans to record and post all the presentations online, to enable access on your schedule. (Emails also will be sent out when the Zoom presentations are uploaded.). If you are not already on one of these lists, you can request to be added by sending an email to sueleskiw1@gmail.com.



Top row: Jerry Rohde; Mark Wilson;
Jaime Carlino. Second row: Arcata
Wharf @ 1905. Bottom: Great-Horned
Owl with gopher (by Joe Galkowski).

2020-21 Board of Directors & Officers

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FOAM website: www.arcatamarshfriends.org
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(Left to right) Volunteer of the Year winners Susan Halpin and Robbin Kohn; Arcata Marsh Bird of the Year runner-up finder Greg Gray.

In the Absence of Barbequed Albacore, FOAM Zooms On

By Sue Leskiw

On Sunday, September 13, FOAM held its 27th annual meeting via Zoom. Some 16 people tuned in to the Powerpoint presentation by Board president Elliott Dabill.

Volunteer of the Year awards were presented to Susan Halpin for her 73.5 hours of front desk staffing and tour leading and to Robbin Kohn for her 52 hours of front desk staffing. (Keep in mind that these time commitments were accomplished when the Interpretive Center was open just 6 out of the 12 months covered in FOAM's fiscal year!)

The contributions of some other volunteers also were noted: Alan Wolski for his front desk staffing; Tom Allen and Elliott Dabill for taking on the task of emptying DoggiPots that the City couldn't handle; and those who kept the Interpretive Center open on holidays (Labor Day, Thanksgiving, New Year's, and MLK Day)—Gail Coonen, Margaret Flenner, Jean Santi, Robbin Kohn, Jeannie Smalley, Bill Prescott, Ken Burton, and Tom and Katy Allen.

The seventh annual Arcata Marsh Bird of the Year award went to Trumpeter Swan, six of which were spotted by Mark and Lucas Stephenson, Lucas Corneliussen, and Amaya Bechler on November 30, 2019. This was only the second Humboldt County record for this species and the first for the Marsh. The runner-up species was a Yellow-throated Vireo, found by Greg Gray on June 18, 2020. This sighting was also a first Marsh record (see article, p. 3)

Elliott reviewed highlights of the 2019/20 Annual Report (see pages 5&6). Paul Johnson and Bill Prescott were elected to the Board.



On July 25, the Arcata Marsh's supportive neighbor, Humboldt Pet Supply (HPS), sponsored a socially distanced cleanup event. FOAM's own Katy (left) and Tom Allen were the big winners of a plethora of prizes—plus a \$20 gift certificate—for picking up the most poop along Marsh trails. The total weight of dog waste and trash collected by all participants was 27.5 pounds.

The business's Facebook page ended its announcement of the event with the following hashtags: [#arcatamarsh](#) [#welovethearcatamarsh](#) [#keepthemarshclean](#) [#cleanupafteryourpet](#) [#keepyourpetleashed](#) [#savethebirds](#).

The date for the next HPS-sponsored Marsh cleanup is yet to be determined. Watch its Facebook page for an announcement.



(Left) Trumpeter Swans by Lucas Corneliussen. (Right) Yellow-throated Vireo by Amaya Bechler.

Runner-up for 2019 Humboldt County Bird of the Year Selected as Arcata Marsh Best Bird

By Mark Stephenson, Greg Gray & Sue Leskiw

2020 marks the seventh year that FOAM has given out an award for the “best” bird spotted at the Arcata Marsh. This year’s time period for consideration was September 1, 2019 through August 31, 2020. Tom Leskiw and Rob Fowler served as the evaluators.

This year, the winner—Trumpeter Swan—had garnered second place for 2019 Humboldt County Bird of the Year, which is awarded at the Godwit Days festival. On November 30, a birding party consisting of Mark and Lucas Stephenson, Lucas Corneliussen, and local high-school birding phenom Amaya Bechler spotted SIX swans at the Marsh.

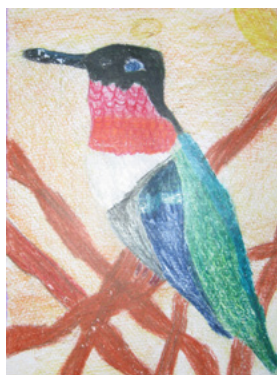
Mark, a birder from Napa, described the experience thusly: “Around 7:20 am, Lucas S. spotted a small flock of swans that we scoped for several minutes. At first, we assumed that they were probably Tundra Swans, given the rarity of Trumpeters along the coast. Given the distance, the ID was extremely difficult. However, Lucas persisted in examining them, we took many photos, and we realized his belief to be correct: they were Trumpeter Swans! They had extremely long necks, a distinct V-shaped forehead pattern, a rectangular head shape, and no yellow lores (between eye and beak) that would be present on most adult Tundras.”

This was only the second photo-confirmed Humboldt County record for this large bird—which averages 23 pounds, 5 feet in length, with an 80-inch wingspan!—and a first Marsh record. Wintering Trumpeter Swans are usually found in coastal Alaska and along the west coast of Canada. Other birders got out there quickly and saw the birds, which were reported on nine eBird checklists. [NOTE: The first photo-confirmed record won Humboldt County Bird of the Year for 2017.]

The second-place avian find at the Marsh was Yellow-throated Vireo, which was seen by Greg Gray on June 18, 2020 at 6:30 am. Greg described his experience thusly: “The moment I stepped out of the car into the parking lot, I heard a noticeably slow vireo call emanating from the tall alders. The call was infrequent and lethargic enough to get my rare bird juices flowing, so I spent some time trying to find the darn thing in the flock, as it seemed to be moving around quite a bit. As I was standing on the trail looking straight up, I suddenly heard the call from the wax myrtle at the far end of the parking lot and rushed in that direction. I finally caught a glimpse of the yellow throat and spectacles of a Yellow-throated Vireo.”

At the time of his discovery, Greg knew the bird was a rarity, but was not aware that he had located a first Marsh record for the species that more properly belongs in the eastern half of the US. He reported his find to the Humboldt Birders Facebook Messenger group and did not wait around very long before other birders showed up to see the vireo.

The finders of both species were sent certificates recognizing their finds.





(Left) City employee Javi Noguiera poses on new AMIC entry stairs. (Right) Another attempt to remove a solar cell from a pathway light. Photos by George Ziminsky.

What's New at the Marsh

By George Ziminsky

Things are pretty quiet here at AMIC as the building remains closed to the public due to COVID-19. Renee and I miss the interactions with both local “regulars” and visitors from far and wide. We also miss the volunteers who staff AMIC on the weekends and hope you all are well.

Those wonderful days will return, although the City has yet to set a date for AMIC to re-open. The building has been receiving some attention during the downtime, addressing plumbing issues and rebuilding the stairs to the east porch. We are thinking about changing the layout in the main room and incorporating some new exhibits.

The educational mission of the Arcata Marsh is adapting to these times with “virtual tours” being produced by the City. A tour of the wastewater treatment plant starring FOAM’s Dave Couch is in the works, to be followed by a general Marsh tour, a bird/wildlife-themed tour, and a historical perspective of the Marsh.

Pete on Native Plants

By Elliott Dabill

Pete Haggard is a dirt detective. Surveying the soil in front of the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center, he saw heavy clay, which holds water well but has little oxygen, so any plants would struggle. That struggle would clash with the goals for the native plant garden: preventing a healthy, year-round attractiveness with balanced herbal and woody varieties. The garden should also be low maintenance and wildlife friendly.

With these parameters in mind, Pete hired himself out for three years, to try to accomplish the balance sought. As far as payment, he would accept all the water he could drink from the hose. Pete now has finished those three years and the Interpretive Center is looking for someone to take over the work he started: building the soil.

During the last in-person lecture at AMIC on February 21, Pete pointed out the plants that you’d see walking up to the building. You can’t miss *Equisetum* (horsetail), in quantities that make it seem

like a weed. Then, the garden proper comes into view, with gumweed (camphor), late-blooming California aster, and goldenrod. Take in the yellow-orange blooms of monkey-flower and the diaphanous beauty of tufted hair grass for texture. An early bloomer is the red-flowering currant near the entrance. So, buy a FOAM native plant book (on sale at AMIC) and identify them all.

Around the Marsh you can find plants that animals love, such as four species of willow and red alder. Breath holding is required while you observe the intimate blue flowers of *Ceanothus*, with their tiny, yellow stamens. Other bushy species are two kinds of manzanita (*Arctostaphylos*): the waist-high *columbiana* and low-to-the-ground bearberry. If they aren’t already friends of yours, you can find motivation for a walk in learning all their habits.

Pete did his detective work for us and blessed us with three years of labor, but he is happy to answer all your plant questions if you can find him around town. He has a history of working around the Coastal Nature Center operated by Friends of the Dunes, the garden between HealthSport and the Arcata Community Center, and other places, so your job is to visit them all repeatedly until you find him. If you learn to love the plants, you can make that circuit a habit and find peace of mind to go with your horticultural knowledge.



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2019/20 FOAM Annual Report (Issued 9/13/20)

Tours: Some 8177 adults and children visited the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center (AMIC) between September 1, 2019 and March 16, 2020, when AMIC was closed due to the coronavirus epidemic. One hundred nine of them participated in the 22 weekly Saturday 2 pm tours led by FOAM docents. FOAM also provided volunteer leaders for 11 special-request group tours.

Education: FOAM's free lecture series continued, with presentations by John DeMartini on clams, Phil Johnston on local weasel family members, Doby Class and Mark Andre on wastewater treatment plant upgrades, Maria Morrow on the Amanita before Christmas; Damon Goodman on lampreys (a reprise), Pete Haggard on AMIC's native plant garden; and Rick Brown on fun local wildlife diseases. (Rick's was the first FOAM lecture via Zoom.)

Starting in June 2019, FOAM Board members Katy Allen and Elliott Dabill met monthly with representatives of Redwood Region Audubon Society to search for ways to inform the local community about the threat that free-roaming cats pose to songbird populations and suggest ways to ameliorate those threats. The joint committee has distributed pamphlets to pet stores and followed the City of Eureka's proposed rewrite of its domestic animal ordinances. A "catio" (outdoor cat enclosure) tour planned for May had to be postponed because of the virus.

Public Events: FOAM presented its sixth Arcata Marsh Bird of the Year awards at its September 29 annual meeting. The winner was White-eyed Vireo, discovered by Rob Fowler. The runner-up award went to Yellow-green Vireo, also spotted by Rob. Both were first records for the Marsh.

In October, FOAM underwrote Take a Child Outside (TACO) Day at the Marsh, which attracted nearly 200 attendees.

In October, FOAM sponsored a square at Pastels on the Plaza, executed by eighth-grader McGuire Bartosz, a multi-year Student Bird Art Contest winner. She drew a pair of Cinnamon Teal.

In November, Alex Stillman, Jenny Hanson, and Tom Leskiw guided FOAM's 20th Thanksgiving Day morning "leg stretcher," attended by approximately 20 people.

In December, Ken Burton and Alex Stillman led a Christmas Day walk attended by about 25 people.

In January, Lynn Jones and Alexa DeJoannis helmed a rainy New Year's Day tour for 5 attendees. Also in January, Elliott Dabill led a King Tide Tour at the Marsh attended by 70 people, with photos and articles appearing afterward in local newspapers.

In February, FOAM tabled at the HSU Career Expo & Volunteer Fair.

In partnership with Redwood Region Audubon Society, FOAM sponsored the 17th Student Bird Art Contest. School closings due to the pandemic knocked participation way down to about 170 entries from grades K12 throughout Humboldt County. Twenty-four cash prizes and 11 honorable mentions were given out--although not in person, as the mid-April 25th Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival was cancelled.

Marsh and Wildlife Through the Eyes of Local Artists: Since December 1998, FOAM has sponsored art and photography shows at the Interpretive Center that are representative of the scenery, plants, birds, and animals that inhabit the Marsh and Humboldt Bay. During this curtailed year, Jose Quezada, Stilson Snow, Gary Bloomfield, and Leslie and Mike Anderson exhibited, with the Andersons' show being up only two weeks before AMIC shut down. It is unknown if and when the winners of the 2020 Student Bird Art Contest will get to be displayed.

(continued on p. 6)

Publicity & Communication: We would like to thank newspapers, radio and TV stations, and online websites for helping us get the message out about our weekly tours, monthly art exhibits and lectures, and other special events at the Marsh. FOAM continues to publish its quarterly newsletter, UPWIND.

City Relations: FOAM paid half of the cost of installing solar lights along the path from the South G Street parking lot to the Interpretive Center.

FOAM bought a new, larger tablet for the main room at AMIC.

FOAM purchased 12 pairs of children's binoculars for use during the City's Marsh summer day camps.

FOAM Board member Lynn Jones repainted the egret welcome signs in the South G Street parking lot and the "Open" signs for AMIC.

FOAM co-sponsored, with the Volunteer Trails Stewards and help from the HSU Natural Resources Club, a January invasive plant removal/trash pickup work day at the Marsh.

FOAM tote bags were reprinted for sale.

FOAM funded two "Volunteer of the Year" awards, presented to Elliott Dabill and Virginia Jimenez

Pete Haggard retired from his yeoman work on the native plant garden in front of the Interpretive Center.

Brett Watson stepped down from serving as FOAM's representative from the Arcata City Council in July, with no replacement named. Renee Thibodeau joined the AMIC staff.

Membership: As of August 31, FOAM had 190 members (up by 10), 96 of whom are Life Members. [NOTE: Twenty-eight of the Life Members are either deceased or have an undeliverable address.]

Fiscal Accounts: As of August 31, FOAM had a checking account balance of \$31,665.57. All of the funds that FOAM raised for Marsh capital improvements have been spent. As of 6/30/20, FOAM also had \$13,109.99 in a fund set up at the Humboldt Area Foundation (HAF).

Expenditures totaled \$11,250.01 and revenues totaled \$9188.81. The largest expenditures incurred in the past year were for 1) cost-sharing with the City of Arcata to install pathway solar lights, 2) underwriting TACO Day, 3) insurance, and 4) UPWIND printing and mailing. Revenue sources were membership dues (\$4328), donations (\$3887.34), merchandise sales (\$595.50, down due to AMIC bookstore closure and no Godwit Days booth), and reimbursements (\$377.97). FOAM also earned \$255.70 in interest/dividends/capital gains on its HAF Fund between 7/1/19 and 6/30/20 (minus management fees of \$239.32).

Board of Directors: Nine current Board Members (Katy Allen, Rick Brown, David Couch, Elliott Dabill, Lynn Jones, Cindy Kuttner, Cosette McCave, Jean Santi, Mark Wilson) will be continuing, one (Bill Prescott) is running for another term, one (Paul Johnson) is running to confirm an interim appointment, and one new candidate (Janette Heartwood) is running.

-- Elliott Dabill, President

By Lynn Jones

[illegible]

January 15—Rat poison is wildlife poison lecture by Jaime Carlino, 7:30 pm, via Zoom (see p. 1)

» Donations: Life Members Richard & Carol Laursen (Carmichael), \$100, "Carry on the good work. we've been in Sacramento the last 14 years, but we haven't forgotten you"; IBM Matching Grant from Steven & Carol Pearson (Portland, OR), \$100; Anne Merrifield, \$50; Amazon Smile, \$13.52; John Stuart, spotting scope.

* = New member

FOAM
Friends of the Arcata Marsh
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Mark Your Calendar for:

Arcata Wharves Lecture, Oct 16

Natural History of Microorganisms Lecture, Nov 20

Rat Poison = Wildlife Poison Lecture, Jan 15

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



Name _____

Address _____

City, State, ZIP _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Please check the appropriate membership category:

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

☐ Sponsor \$50 ☐ Best Friend \$100 ☐ Life Member \$750

☐ I would like more information about volunteering for FOAM,

FRIENDS OF THE ARCATA MARSH, PO Box 410, Arcata CA 95518

www.arcatamarshfriends.org

A tax-exempt, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, EIN #68-0232871. All donations are tax deductible.

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.