



UPWIND

from the Arcata Marsh
Interpretive Center
Vol 28, Issue 2, Spring 2021

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 Lecture... Saturday Tours to Restart... Native Plant Garden Update... Tech Updates... What's New at the Marsh... Science Fair Awards... Student Bird Art Contest Results... The Creative Process... Calendar... Supporters



May speaker Karlee Jewell with one of the otter sculptures.

Upcoming Lecture

On Friday, May 21, Humboldt State graduate student Karlee Jewell will share project updates and findings from the HSU Citizen Science River Otter Study directed by Dr Jeff Black. Karlee will discuss the project's new website and give a synopsis of her graduate research to date during her lecture, "Merging Citizen Science and Art: North Coast Otters—A Year in Review + Year Ahead." Attendees can watch the presentation live starting at 7:30 pm via this Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89934694851>; Meeting ID: 899 3469 4851; by telephone 669-900-9128.

A Q&A session will follow the talk, which will be recorded and posted on the new FOAM YouTube channel (see article, p. 2) and on Zoom.

As a graduate student in HSU's Environmental Science and Management program, Karlee's research focuses on citizen science and science communication. As a project manager with the Northcoast Regional Land Trust, she brings experience

as a trained environmental educator and nature resource professional whose work has focused on sustainable land use practices throughout northern California to enhance community stewardship of land and wildlife habitat.

FOAM members, volunteers, and past lecture attendees for whom we have an e-mail will be sent a link to the Zoom meeting a few days prior to the event. When this issue went to press, no lectures beyond May had been confirmed.

[NOTE: A large painted otter sculpture will take up temporary residence in the Interpretive Center sometime this year, courtesy of sponsorship donations from Tom and Katy Allen and FOAM. It is part of a fundraiser headed by Dr Black, where otter statues placed throughout the community will be knit together into a scavenger hunt.]

FOAM Plans to Restart Saturday 2 pm Tours May 15

Join FOAM president and retired high school science teacher Elliott Dabill for the first guided Saturday tour in over a year! Meet in front of the Interpretive Center at 2 pm for a 90-minute walk. Tour capacity is limited to 15 people wearing masks and practicing social distancing when the County is in the Orange COVID tier. (The building will not be open yet, so no bathroom or bookstore breaks are possible.) Tours will be cancelled if Humboldt County returns to Red Tier status. Leaders for the remainder of May are Ken Burton (author of local bird books and a Humboldt hiking guide) on May 22 and naturalist Jenny Hanson on May 29.

No word yet on when the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center will reopen to the general public.

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Spring, Here We Come: Native Plant Garden Transformation Enters Second Phase

*By Heather Schmidt, Recreation
Department, City of Arcata*

On a sunny May morning the bees are buzzing as they move from fairybells to evergreen huckleberry blossoms. An Anna's Hummingbird swoops and darts overhead. We already are beginning to see the rewards of Lynne and Paul's hard work and dedication. Spring is in the air and the now-completed first phase of the Native Plant Garden is bursting with life.

As readers may recall from the previous article in the winter issue of UPWIND, with financial support from FOAM, brother-and-sister duo Lynne and Paul Abels have stepped in to volunteer their time and talents to re-vamp our Native Plant Garden at the doorstep of AMIC. Phase I, which was planted in mid-February, is growing and changing day by day. Columbine, azalea, and blue-eyed grass are among the many species currently showing their colors.

Mid-May will bring more changes to the garden, as we take major steps to complete the second phase. This larger section borders the paved path leading to AMIC. With support from City staff, along with volunteers from Arcata High's ACORN project and FOAM Board members,

we will move a large amount of soil into the area so that planting can begin in the near future. This second section includes the enormous *Ceanothus* now in full bloom that sits at the center of the garden. Lynne's design will highlight multiple micro-climates, including a zone featuring native plants that thrive in our coastal sandy soils.

We hope that you will stop by soon and often so you can see the transformation and begin to enjoy all that it has to offer, not only to human visitors but wildlife as well.

We will continue to hold work days throughout the spring and hope to begin training interested volunteers in garden upkeep activities like watering and weed removal. If you are interested in volunteering, whether you are already a FOAM volunteer or looking to get involved, contact the Marsh Interpretive Center at 707-826-2359. We will schedule a time to complete the necessary paperwork and volunteer orientation. [More garden pix on page 7!]

Tech Updates for FOAM

By Lynn Jones

The temporary closure of the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center and cancellation of all tours made the FOAM Board rethink how to keep sharing information about our beautiful wildlife sanctuary throughout the pandemic. Like millions of Americans, our meetings are virtual, our walks are masked and distanced, and our projects are reprioritized.

One goal reached was the creation of a FOAM YouTube channel, [FOAM Friends of the Arcata Marsh Lectures](#). The impetus came from the remarkable Friday monthly lectures that we were able to continue via Zoom. This year's fascinating presenters shared expertise ranging from Marsh history to its future, and from the invisible to the conspicuous. The talks are on our channel in their entirety. Several fans have mentioned that they've gone back to watch more than once!

FOAM also has begun updating its [Friends of the Arcata Marsh](#) website. With faster loading speed, updated maps, and a Homepage

events calendar, we will continue to improve accessibility so that the information you want is at your fingertips.

If you're a Facebook person, follow our page—Friends of the Arcata Marsh—for the latest news, pictures, and links to related information. Add to the discussion!

Anytime you have questions, ideas, or suggestions, contact us at info@arcatamarshfriends.org.



Female Anna's Hummingbird on nest at Log Pond. Photo by George Ziminsky.

What's New at the Marsh

By George Ziminsky

Spring has arrived at the Arcata Marsh, with the saltmarsh hosting magenta Humboldt Bay owl's-clover in full bloom. Above the reach of the tides, big-leaved lupines provides patches of blue, while field mustard contributes bright yellow to the mix.

Spring is one of the busiest and most diverse times for birds at the Marsh. Lingering shorebirds and Aleutian Cackling Geese will soon join the rest of their kind in migrating north. Canada Geese and Mallards are already minding their broods all over the Marsh. With the return of Yellow-breasted Chats and Bullock's Orioles, two of our most charismatic and colorful breeders are back. Anna's Hummingbirds have been busy since February with nesting and fledging. We have found at least seven nests just around the Log Pond and there are sure to be more.

(continued on page 3)

While the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center has been closed for over a year now, things here haven't been static. The Native Plant Garden is receiving an almost-complete makeover, with Phase I installed and blooming. A diverse assemblage of native plants now extends from the building to a new gravel walkway that meanders east/west. Work has started on Phase 2 to the north of the gravel walkway and reaching to the existing asphalt path (see article, p. 2). An access door has been installed under the building to allow easier use of outside water for the garden and other projects. Thanks, Javi!

AMIC staffer Renee Thibodeau decided it was time to move on and we wish her well on her travels. AMIC will again host morning and afternoon sessions of Marsh Camp this year, from June 14 through August 20. As occurred last year, the building will be closed to the public while camp is in session, in order to meet COVID restrictions. An array of logistical issues complicates re-opening, so as we go to press, a firm date is unknown.

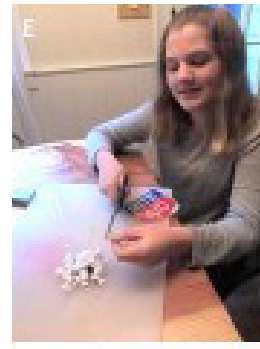
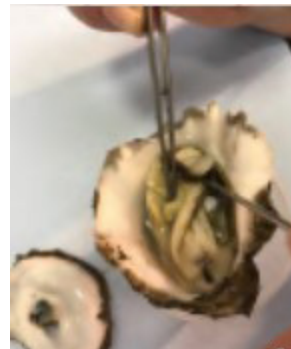
We hope you have been well and look forward to seeing you out on the trails!

FOAM's Science Fair Awards

By Sue Leskiw

For the 15th year, FOAM sponsored an award at the Humboldt County Science Fair for the best project(s) related to wetlands. Due to the quality of the projects in 2021, two \$50 first prizes were awarded: one in a junior division (grades 5-7) and one in a senior division (grades 8-12).

First prize in junior division went to Anya Seiler, a 6th grader at Jacoby Creek School, for her project, "Small Plastics Big Problem." Her goal was to find a species of bacteria that will grow on and decompose microplastics. The reason Anya tackled this subject was because microplastics are hurtful to animals that live within water and people that live around it. (For example, 100% of baby sea turtles have microplastics in their bodies.) Anya plated 1,260 bacterial colonies that were cultured



(L) Jackson preparing cytospin filter and slides with dissolved oyster gills. (C) Gill dissection of Kumamoto oysters. (R) Anya cutting up microplastics.

from five water samples collected from Humboldt Bay. Sixty-six unique bacterial colonies were plated onto agar plates containing polystyrene, polyethylene, and polyethylene terephthalate microplastics. One species of bacteria grew on the plates with the highest concentration of microplastics. However, when she tried to confirm the results, no bacteria grew on the microplastic-containing plates. Anya concluded that bacteria that grow on microplastics are rare and hard to grow, but she would like to use other strategies to confirm the results and to investigate other species of bacteria that could decompose microplastics.

First prize in senior division was awarded to Jackson Zagone, now a freshman at Six Rivers High School, but who performed his research on "Looking for Microplastics in Humboldt Bay Oysters" as an 8th grader at Jacoby Creek School. (Humboldt's Science Fair was cancelled in 2020 and run virtually in 2021.) Jackson obtained 13 oysters, extracted their gills, and dissolved them with potassium hydroxide, leaving behind fluid and any non-organic material. He then ran the remains twice through centrifugation before using a final centrifugation process called Cytospin that places the solids on a slide to be observed under a microscope. Jackson's results found that all 13 oysters contained microplastics, with microfibers the most common type seen. Thus, he concluded that there is a fair amount of microplastics in Humboldt Bay that ends up in farmed oysters. Jackson was selected to compete at the virtual State science fair in April.

Results of 18th Annual Student Bird Art Contest

By Sue Leskiw, Coordinator

In this second spring of the coronavirus pandemic, nearly 300 school kids pulled out paints, pencils, pastels, or paste to enter the 18th Annual Student Bird Art Contest. Cosponsors were FOAM and Redwood Region Audubon Society.

The contest usually is held in association with mid-April's Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival in Arcata. When the festival decided to go virtual in 2021, the art contest followed suit, with entry and judging done online. Gary Bloomfield, Catherine McNally, and myself split duties to make the temporary transition and devise how to handle the new process.

Winners from 2020 and 2021 will be hung for a two-month art show once the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center reopens. A downloadable booklet containing the artwork will be posted in May at www.godwitdays.org, www.rras.org, and www.arcatamarshfriends.org.

Some \$450 was awarded: 27 monetary prizes plus 19 honorable mentions. Depending on the number of entries per grade, some levels were combined and others received more than one set of awards, to even out the chances of winning.

The winners are:

Kindergarten & Grade 1

First Place: Olivia Osorio, Redwood Montessori, Long-billed Curlew

Second Place: Kaydee Carper, Dow's Prairie Elementary, Hummingbird

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Third Place: Avery Skehen, Mattole Elementary, Red-shouldered Hawk

Honorable Mentions: Felix Davidson, Redwood Montessori, Bald Eagle; Owen Rogers, Jacoby Creek Elementary, Belted Kingfisher

Grades 2&3

First Place: Brighton Winfield, Union Street Charter, Spotted Towhee

First Place: Liam Ward, Northern United Charter, Red-tailed Hawk

Second Place: Ender Guthrie, Fuente Nueva Charter, Cedar Waxwing

Second Place: Berna Queener, Mattole Elementary, Western Bluebird

Third Place: Syllas Kauffmann, Redwood Montessori, White-tailed Kite

Third Place: Kate Kurylo, Six Rivers Montessori, California Quail

Honorable Mentions: Adeline Pierce, Jacoby Creek Elementary, American Robin; Vivian Miller, Northern United Charter, Wood Duck

Grade 4

First Place: Bony McKnight, Coastal Grove Charter, Ruby-crowned Kinglet

First Place: Logan Hunter, Arcata Christian, Bald Eagle

Second Place: Lola Distefano, Cutten Elementary, American Avocet

Second Place: Ricardo Freitas, Northern United Charter, Great Blue Heron

Third Place: Elliot Banducci, Cutten Elementary, Chestnut-backed Chickadee

Third Place: Oliver Bullwinkle, Garfield Elementary, Steller's Jay

Honorable Mentions: Everett Gruetzmacher, Arcata Christian, Osprey; Miriam Harper, Blue Lake Elementary, Wood Duck; Luna Madrone, Six Rivers Montessori, Wood Ducks

Grades 5&6

First Place: Francisco Tovar, Northern United Charter, Ferruginous Hawk

Second Place: Trillium Pitts, Alder Grove Charter, Gt. Blue Heron



Third Place: Luke Prieditis, Jacoby Creek Elementary, Peregrine Falcon

Honorable Mentions: Emileigh Schmidt, Scotia Elementary, Osprey; Ruby Sheppard, Northcoast Preparatory Academy, Anna's Hummingbird

Grades 7&8

First Place: Klara Sundeen, Jacoby Creek Elementary, Great Blue Heron

Second Place: October Mintey, Freshwater Elementary, Northern Flicker

Third Place: Lila Woodworth, Redwood Coast Montessori, Wood Duck

Honorable Mentions: Kaia Caldwell, Alder Grove Charter, Black-crowned Night-Heron; Zinnia Clifford, Redwood Coast Montessori, Marsh Wren; Trinity McNeese, Zane Middle, Blue Jay

Grade 9

First Place: Keirstyn Semas, Eureka High, White-tailed Kite

Second Place: Avalon Winfield, Six Rivers Charter High, Purple Finch

Third Place: Bella Tarlton, Six Rivers Charter High, Cedar Waxwing

Honorable Mentions: Abby Cassidy, Eureka High, Purple Finch; Laylah Rios, Eureka High, Bald Eagle; Bryanna Lopez-Tejeda, Academy of the Redwoods, Steller's Jay

Grades 10-12

First Place: Tyler Petrusha, Eureka High, Wood Duck

Second Place: Annabelle Pastori, Academy of the Redwoods, Blue Jay

Third Place: Eilene Childs, Alder Grove Charter, California Quail

Honorable Mentions: Cheyenne Wilson, Arcata High, Bald Eagle; Jana Hernandez, Eureka High, Cinnamon Teal; Xatimniim Drake, Hoopa Valley High, Pileated Woodpecker; Gabriel Fugate, Eureka High, Western Meadowlark

To view a slideshow of the winning entries in the 2021 Student Bird Art Contest, go to www.arcatamarsh-friends.org and on the opening screen, scroll down to the link after the Calendar items.



Bony McKnight and her Ruby-crowned Kinglet artwork.

The Creative Process

By Bony McKnight, Trillium Pitts & Sue Leskiw

This spring, I served as contest coordinator for both the 18th Annual Student Bird Art Contest, cosponsored by FOAM and Redwood Region Audubon Society (RRAS), and the 16th Annual Student Nature Writing Contest, sponsored by RRAS. Two instances of the rare double winner occurred in 2021: students who won a cash prize in both contests. They were Bony McKnight, a fourth-grader homeschooled through Coastal Grove Charter School, and Trillium Pitts, a fifth-grader at Alder Grove Charter School.

As I began to put together this issue of UPWIND, I had a brainstorm: Why not ask these two girls about their inspiration and creative process for their art contest drawings? I sent them a few potential questions to answer:

- » How did you select what species to draw? Was the one you submitted your first choice, or did you change birds along the way?
- » How did you decide on what medium/media to use to portray your bird?
- » What resources did you use (eg, photographs, drawings in bird guides) to get the look of the bird?
- » How long did it take you to reach the final version? Did you start over somewhere along the line?
- » Why did you decide to enter the contest this year?

I'll begin with Bony, who has won first prize in her grade group for her bird art every year she has entered, beginning with Kindergarten in 2017 and continuing in 2021 with her drawing of a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. (Not a common bird for kids to tackle!) This year, she won first prize in the writing contest for her essay entitled "On Hummingbird Wings" in the junior division (grades 4-6).

Here are Bony's thoughts about her creative process: "I've been participating in the Godwit Days bird drawing contest every year since kindergarten. This year I drew a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. We've been seeing them around our yard; I think they're cute and not very many people would choose to draw them. My mom and I Googled Ruby-crowned Kinglets and I chose a few of my favorite pictures to print, then combined them for the drawing. I drew a graph over the main photo and my notebook page so that I can get the size and shape of the bird better.

I chose watercolor and pencil because those are some of the mediums I work best with. I've been looking at some guides to nature drawing by John Muir Laws and I took the idea of using a white gel pen for the white spots and the eye reflection from those books. I spent all my free time away from my little sister working on the drawing. I was really frustrated with my work but I still entered the first completed drawing because I didn't have time to do another one, and I figured it was good enough to enter. I like this contest and I enter it every year because I love doing art."

(continued on page 6)



Trillium Pitts and her Great Blue Heron artwork.

In 2021, Trillium won second prize in grades 5-6 for her drawing of a Great Blue Heron. She also wrote a poem entitled “Nature” that garnered second place in the junior division of the RRAS writing contest. Here is her very complete response to my request to delve into her artistic process:

“Thank you for selecting me as one of the 2021 winners of the Student Bird Art Contest! I am honored to be recognized in this contest. Although I did select my drawing of a Great Blue Heron as my candidate, it was not the only sketch that I created for this contest. I wanted to be able to pick and choose between my different drawings, so I could select my favorite to submit. My drawing of a Great Blue Heron is the only sketch that I colored; the other bird drawings were done in pencil. I drew a Spotted Owl, a Peregrine Falcon, a Great Egret, a Bald Eagle, and a Steller’s Jay before selecting the Great Blue Heron. At first, I was going to submit my drawing of a Spotted Owl, but I decided that I preferred the heron in the end.

Although I do have oil pastels and high-quality pastel paper that I received from my grandparents for Christmas, I decided to just use pencils and colored pencils for my drawings. Though you can blend pastels to soften the lines that they leave behind, whereas you can’t blend pencil markings very well at all, I am not an experienced pastel artist. I have been drawing with graphite pencils for as long as I can remember, so I feel more comfortable using them. That is why I chose them as my medium.

For all of my bird drawings created solely for this contest, I looked up the bird I was drawing, just to get a basic outline, such as the definition of the beak, head, neck, body, and legs. When I had the rough outline of the bird, I would revise my sketch to make it more realistic, and closer to the image in my imagination. Then, I would add more details, such as feathers, eyes, and wing markings. After I had sketched every detail that I wanted to include in my bird drawing, I would get out a bird guide to check that my depiction of the bird was accurate.

Sketching all of my bird drawings for the contest took about a week. Drawing my spotted owl took the better part of two days, and sketching my great blue heron took two or three, if you count the days right before I submitted my drawing that were spent revising and filling in unnecessarily negative space.

I decided to enter a drawing in this contest primarily because of the combination of my love for nature and my love for art. I have loved art ever since I was tiny, and my parents always encouraged me to keep drawing (and still do). Because of my deep respect and love for the wonders, mysteries, and unfathomable wild beauty of nature, my art and the natural world are usually interwoven. It is impossible to express my gratitude that this contest exists to cultivate art and nature, my two greatest loves in the world.”

[If you’d like to read the two’s winning writing entries, go to www.rras.org and scroll down on the opening screen to find the contest link in the right-hand column.]





(L) Cardboard weed barrier laid down on 2/3 (photo by Heather Schmidt). (R) Garden status on 2/10 (photo by George Ziminsky).



To view a slideshow of the winning entries in the 2021 Student Bird Art Contest, go to www.arcatamarsh-friends.org and on the opening screen, scroll down to the link after the Calendar items.



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Calendar of Events

[Starting May 15, docent-led tours will leave the closed Interpretive Center every Saturday at 2 pm, as long as Humboldt County is above the Red COVID tier]

May 15—Resumption of Saturday 2 pm Marsh Tours, leader Elliott Dabill (see p. 1).

May 21—Otter research lecture, Kaylee Jewell, 7:30 pm, via Zoom (see p. 1)

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* = New member.

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Otter Research Lecture, 5/21

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www.arcatamarshfriends.org

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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.)

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