



UPWIND

from the Arcata Marsh
Interpretive Center
Vol 17, Issue 3, Fall 2010

In This Issue: October Lectures & Twilight Walk... Docent Training Results... Thanksgiving & New Year's Day Walks... Annual Meeting & Election Results... Invasive Plant Work Day... Wildlife Camp Success... Student Bird Art Contest... Houck Memorial ... "Poop-A-Palooza"... Birds Matter... FOAM T-shirts... Science Fair Award... Plant Walk Held... Naturalist Column... Plants of the Marsh... Annual Report... Artist Statements... Visitor Log... Calendar of Upcoming Events... Thanks to Supporters

Special Tuesdays in October

In recognition of Coastweeks, FOAM is planning two free lectures and a special walk at the Arcata Marsh. [NOTE: Final details of these events were pending when this issue went to press. Please call the Interpretive Center at 707-826-2359 to confirm before attending.]

Oct 12, 6:30-7:30 pm. HSU graduate student and new FOAM Board member Mary Burke will update attendees on her research on carbon sequestration by Arcata Marsh plants. She received a research grant from FOAM for this work.

Oct 19, 6-7:30 pm. City Naturalist Denise Homer will lead a very special Twilight Walk around the Marsh. Bring a flashlight and dress warmly. Meet at Klopp Lake parking on South I Street.

Oct 26, 6:30-7:30 pm. HSU chemistry professor Matt Hurst will report updated results of his study of water samples from the Arcata Marsh and Humboldt Bay. Dr Hurst has been examining seasonal variation in heavy metals and other substances. This represents the third year that he will give a talk for FOAM.



New Arcata Marsh docents and City Naturalist Denise Homer at August training.
Photo by Elliott Dabill.

Successful Docent Training Held

On August 14-15, FOAM held its fall docent training, organized by Elliott Dabill. Ten people attended the sessions taught by Bob Rasmussen, David Couch, Ken Burton, Jenny Hanson, Denise Homer, and Elliott Dabill. Those completing the training were Tom Allen, Ralph Bucher, John Clagett, Tara Hohoff, Guy Kuttner, Page Powell, Jack Schubert, Anna Smith, Jane Wilson, and George Ziminsky. Three of the docents have already been scheduled to lead Saturday tours!

2010-11 Board of Directors & Officers

Officers

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

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

Secretary: Katy Allen (Education; Membership) — 707-822-2312

Treasurer: Art Barab (also Saturday Tours, Exhibits) — 707-826-7017

Other Board Members

Leslie Anderson (Design; Art Exhibits; Website) — 707-822-6444

Mary Burke — 707-599-1212

John Clagett — 707-407-8938

David Couch (Special Events) — 707-839-4253

Guy Kuttner — 707-822-7831

Megan McCue — 707-826-7487

Lance Torgerson (Education) — 707-826-1525

George Ziminsky — 707-826-9240

Membership Database

Janet Zich (also Exhibits; Website) — 707-822-4660

Two Holiday Sojourns

FOAM is pleased to confirm the continuation of two special walks at the Arcata Marsh.

First, veteran tour leader Art Barab will lead his 11th annual Thanksgiving morning meander on Thursday, November 25 at 10 am. Meet on the porch of the Interpretive Center (building will be closed for the holiday) for this 90-minute appetite builder.

Then, naturalist Jenny Hanson will, for the third time, help you celebrate the New Year with a 2-hour ramble starting at 2 pm on Saturday, January 1. Meet on the porch of the Interpretive Center (building will be closed for the holiday).



2010 Annual Meeting & Election Results

On Sunday, September 26, FOAM held its 17th annual meeting at the Interpretive Center. Nearly 40 people attended the albacore barbeque lunch by David Couch, with FOAM Board members providing side dishes.

President Sue Leskiw reviewed highlights of the 2009/10 Annual Report (see pages 5&6). She also reported the results of the election: 37 ballots were returned by members in good standing. Confirmed as Board members were Mary Burke, John Claggett, Guy Kuttner, Megan McCue, and George Ziminsky. Re-elected for a second term was Lance Torgerson.

City naturalist Denise Homer selected Ken Burton and Elliott Dabill as Volunteers of the Year. Each received a certificate and \$25 credit in the Interpretive Center bookstore.



Volunteer of the Year Elliott Dabill with Denise Homer. Photo by Sue Leskiw.



2010-11 FOAM Board Members. Front row (from left): Guy Kuttner, Megan McCue, Katy Allen, Sue Leskiw. Back row: George Ziminsky, John Claggett, Elliott Dabill, Lance Torgerson, Leslie Anderson, David Couch. Not shown: Mary Burke.

Photo by Tom Leskiw.

Marsh Volunteers Repel the Invaders

By Sue Leskiw

On an overcast late July morning, 18 hard workers gathered on South I Street to rid a small portion of the Marsh of its unwanted plant species. They used weed wrenches, picks, loppers, and other tools to remove invasive fennel, periwinkle, and bull thistle near the first parking lot and along the new levee. The volunteers were Tom and Katy Allen, Jenna Aten, Nathaniel Brown, Ken Burton, Maria Comas and her grandson Damien, Lynnette Chen, Elliott Dabill, Ned Forsyth, Steve and Harley Gustafson, Sue Leskiw, Brendan Locke, Tom Meyer, Chet Ogan, David Nurkiewicz, and Kathryn Wiles.

The event was cosponsored by FOAM and the City of Arcata. The City provided food and drink to refuel the volunteers, as well as the tools necessary to carry out the job.

New FOAM Board member George Ziminsky guided volunteers participating in the September 18 nationwide Day of Caring campaign to clean up several abandoned camping sites at the Marsh. His photos were featured in the September 22 issue of the *Arcata Eye* under the recurring headline, "Hellholes of Arcata."

The next joint invasive removal work day will be Saturday, December 11. Contact Dennis Houghton at 707-825-2163 for information on meeting place and time.



(From left to right) Invasive plant removers Nathaniel Brown, Ken Burton, Damien, and Elliott Dabill. Photos by Sue Leskiw.

FOAM Cosponsors Wildlife Biology Camp

By Sue Leskiw

On June 26, FOAM joined with Redwood Region Audubon Society for the third year to host a day-long session for children age 9-12 at the Arcata Marsh. The session was part of the Wildlife Biology week of Arcata Recreation Department's Natural Resources Science Camp.

The day kicked off with a low-tide Bay "Mud Walk" to collect invertebrates, led by FOAM Board member Elliott Dabill and HSU graduate student Julie Koeppel. After the mud was hosed off the campers, Elliott, Julie, and FOAM Board member Bob Rasmussen helped the students operate the microscopes and FlexCam to identify what they had collected.

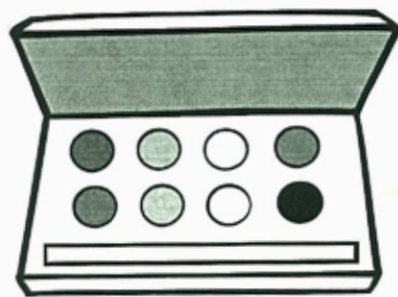
To close out the day, Audubon volunteers Tom Leskiw and David Fix took the campers on a birding tour of the Marsh.

FOAM president Sue Leskiw was responsible for recruiting the volunteers and taking photographs. Volunteer Jean Santi helped set up and clean up the specimen viewing area.

FOAM provided \$240 to sponsor two children to attend the camp. In exchange, the students submitted essays about their experiences. To quote from those writings: "The Marsh was a lot of fun; my favorite part was looking at the water samples"... "I liked listening and watching for birds." FOAM thanks all the volunteers for their contributions of knowledge and good spirits.



Scenes from Summer Camp. Photos by Sue Leskiw.



March 25 Deadline for Student Bird Art Contest Entries

For the eighth consecutive year, FOAM and Redwood Region Audubon Society are co-sponsoring a Student Bird Art Contest. At least \$500 in prizes will be awarded to Humboldt County students from kindergarten through high school. Special prize(s) will be given for best depictions 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 in mid-April. 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 suggested list of 40 species or another common local bird. One entry per person.

Flyers with complete rules will be available in mid-November 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 St, Eureka 95501. Artwork 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 Rd, Eureka 95503. Entries must be received by Friday, March 25 to be considered.

Houck Memorial

FOAM has received donations in the name of Warren Jacob "Jake" Houck, a former HSU biology professor who passed away on July 24. His family requested that money be given to FOAM in lieu of flowers. We thank his daughters for recognizing the special place that the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary held for Dr Houck and will put the receipts to good use.

The Princess of Poop, Queen of Caca, Duchess of Dooky, Empress of Excrement (You Get the Idea...)

By Darlene Marlow

Among the many delights of volunteering at the Marsh, my favorite is discussing wastewater treatment with groups of little children. Bo---ring! one may think, but not at all.

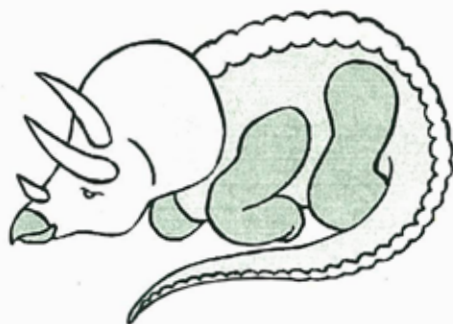
Little children are interested in poop; they like to talk about poop; they are amazed that a grown-up they don't know will talk with them about poop. Over the years since I designed this program, kids have approached me in stores, at the airport, and on the beach to shout, "You're the lady from the Marsh who talks about poop!" and to introduce me to their bemused parents.

To start the poop activity, we read and discuss the picture book *Everyone Poops* by Taro Gomi. One little girl tells about how her rabbit hops all around her bedroom, leaving small, round souvenirs. A little boy proudly explains how he had to "go in the bushes" on a camping trip. A third child confides that her ill-mannered dog is unable to tell the difference between inside and outside. Several have baby brothers or sisters who still use diapers. We talk about why it's important to keep our environment clean.

Then we'll discuss how much we like fish and crabs and maybe oysters (with predictable "EWWW's" from some). Finally, we get to the point: we clean wastewater at the Marsh before we put it back in Humboldt Bay so the food we catch there will be good and healthy.

If the children are going for a hike, we talk about what scat they might see. "Scat" sounds more scientific than "poop." We consult the chart to see what different animals' scat looks like. Everyone agrees they are unlikely to see any whale or tiger or polar bear scat, and we think about reasons why not. After we list the possibilities of raccoon, cat, dog, skunk, fox, bird, bug, and possum scat, one child may timidly suggest wolf scat or -- gasp! -- even bear scat. Somehow, no one really wants to see a wolf or a bear in the Marsh, or even their leavings.

This summer, at the last Marsh Explorers Day Camp, a little boy demonstrated how a Triceratops could sleep two ways by first stretching out, and then getting up on his hands and knees. "Sometimes," he said, "the dinosaur sleeps standing up, so that would make it easier to sneak up on him in the Marsh."



I laughed. "Maybe you could find a piece of petrified dinosaur poop sometime," I said. "It's called coprolite." (Add that to your Compendium of Useless Information.)

"You know," the camp counselor said gently, "dinosaurs are extinct. You can't see one alive anymore, even here at the Marsh."

"Maybe," the little boy conceded, "but I still like to think about them!" (Me too.)

My thanks to the Friends of Arcata Marsh and the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center for these opportunities for volunteering; they bring me joy.

P.S. I hope you think about poop -- and Triceratops! -- on your next walk around the Marsh!

Birds Matter

[From California Audubon]

- According to the US Fish & Wildlife Service, nearly 6 million Californians consider themselves birders.
- More than 600 bird species call California home.
- California contains 145 Important Bird Areas, essential habitat that must be protected to sustain our state's bird populations.
- The California Condor had its origins in the Pleistocene Era, which ended nearly 12,000 years ago.

FOAM short-sleeved T-shirts are now available for \$12 plus tax in the Marsh Bookstore. Sizes S-XL in Oceana Blue and Pistachio Green.

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 in mid-March at Humboldt State University. FOAM volunteer judges will evaluate exhibits created by elementary and middle school students to choose a winner of \$50.

2009/10 FOAM Annual Report (Issued 9/26/10)

Tours: Some 21,150 adults and children visited the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center between September 2009 and August 2010, up nearly 700 from the previous 12-month period. Some participated in the weekly 2 pm tours offered rain or shine by FOAM docents. Tours of the wastewater treatment plant were discontinued at the request of the City. FOAM provided docents for 146 special-request group tours, ranging from classrooms – preschool through college – to community groups.

Education: On June 28, for the 3rd year, FOAM and Redwood Region Audubon Society partnered to offer a day-long session for children age 9-12 at the Arcata Marsh. The module was part of the Wildlife Biology week of the Arcata Recreation Department's Natural Resources Science Camp. The curriculum consisted of a bird walk, a "Mud Walk," and viewing of invertebrates collected from the Bay and Log Pond through microscopes. Instructors were Elliott Dabill, Bob Rasmussen, Julie Koeppel, Tom Leskiw, and David Fix. Sue Leskiw pulled together the schedule and Jean Santi helped set up and clean up. FOAM sponsored two children to attend the camp. FOAM also underwrote the cost of equipment and art supplies for the City's new Marsh Explorers and Young Explorers summer camp sessions.

For the 5th year, FOAM funded an award at the Humboldt County Science Fair in March. The \$50 prize for the best project related to wetlands went to Ryan Thomas, a 7th-grader at Laurel Tree Learning Center's Mattole Valley Charter School. His project was entitled "Water Quality of Little River, Moonstone Beach as Reflected in Bacterial Counts." Sue Leskiw and Elliott Dabill served as judges.

FOAM published an updated Marsh bird checklist, compiled by David Fix and Rob Fowler.

In October, FOAM co-sponsored a *Spartina* (cordgrass) forum with the City of Arcata. About 35 attended the event, organized by habitat concerns chair Ken Burton and held at the Arcata Community Center.

In recognition of the statewide Coastweeks celebration, Bob Rasmussen and David Couch arranged for three free public lectures at the Interpretive Center in October: HSU chemistry professor Matt Hurst, final results of Marsh and Bay water analysis; HSU graduate students Teresa Persons and Mary Burke, their research at Arcata Marsh; and HSU graduate students Julie and Robert Koeppel and David Couch, native oyster restoration research. An average of 20 attended the talks.

FOAM purchased two new spotting scopes and tripods for use in the Interpretive Center and by docents. FOAM also split the cost of a digital projector with Redwood Region Audubon Society.

FOAM awarded additional funding to HSU graduate student Mary Burke, to cover the increased cost of sample testing for her project assessing the Arcata Marsh for carbon sequestration.

City Naturalist Denise Homer, Sue Leskiw, and Katy Allen have been participating in quarterly meetings of the California Regional Environmental Education Community (CREEC). Denise is collaborating with an eighth-grade class from Sunny Brae Middle School to create a "Quest" at the Marsh.

Ken Burton, with help from David Fix and Julie Neander, wrote a site description of the Arcata Marsh, which had been selected as one of six Important Aquatic Bird Sites in northwestern California.

The FOAM Board led a successful effort to keep Segway (motorized scooter) tours off Marsh trails.

Katy Allen served as FOAM point person at meetings concerning a Class 1 trail through the Marsh.

Leslie Anderson, Ken Burton, and David Fix are cooperating to produce a binder with color photographs and species descriptions of the 50 most common birds at the Marsh.

There was no Wetlands on Wheels (WOW) program this year.

Volunteer Training & News: Docent training was offered once (with the spring session cancelled because of few signups). Ten people completed a 2-day training on August 14-15, organized by Elliott Dabill. Instructors were Bob Rasmussen, David Couch, Ken Burton, Jenny Hanson, Denise Homer, and Elliott Dabill. Most of the new docents attended a follow-up plant walk on August 28 offered by Jenny Hanson. In December, David Couch gave a refresher wastewater treatment course to docents, as long-time monthly tour leader Alan Laurent retired due to poor health. Long-sleeved T-shirts were printed for active volunteers. Sue Leskiw initiated a monthly e-mail message to volunteers, to both recruit tour leaders and to keep docents updated on happenings at the Marsh.

Public Events: In partnership with Redwood Region Audubon Society, FOAM sponsored the 7th Student Bird Art Contest at Godwit Days. Over 600 entries were received from grades K-12 throughout Humboldt County. Thirty-two cash prizes and 18 honorable mentions were awarded at Godwit Days. The winning entries were displayed at the Interpretive Center during May. FOAM continued funding the award category of "Best Depiction of a Bird in its

Habitat," with five winners selected. Judges were Leslie Anderson, Louise Bacon-Ogden, Art Barab, Gary Bloomfield, Denise Homer, Sue Leskiw, Sara Starr, and Gwen Thoele.

In October, FOAM continued its participation in Arcata's "Pastels on the Plaza" fundraiser, sponsoring a sidewalk square design by Leslie Anderson with help from Judy Sears that featured a Wood Duck. In November, Art Barab led his 10th consecutive Thanksgiving Day morning "leg stretcher" for 12-15 people, while Jenny Hanson for the second year led a New Year's Day walk that attracted 14.

In April, FOAM continued its participation in the Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival. Approximately 80-100 children and parents took part in FOAM's free family nature activities coordinated by Sue Leskiw and Darlene Marlow, assisted by volunteers Katy Allen, Shana Stearn, Lori Loveall, and five members of the Sequoia Park Roots & Shoots Club. The kids made Arcata Marsh water cycle bracelets, peanut butter pinecone bird feeders, 3-D paper birds and butterflies, fish prints, and eagle talon key chains. A 90-minute tour of the wastewater plant by David Couch was offered as part of the festival schedule. FOAM volunteers staffed an information and sales table in the Bird Fair vendor area, coordinated by Janet Zich, which showcased the new FOAM poster display designed by Leslie Anderson.

Marsh and Wildlife Through the Eyes of Local Artists: Since December 1998, FOAM has sponsored monthly art shows representative of the scenery, plants, birds, and animals that inhabit the Marsh and Humboldt Bay. Our goal has been to provide interpretive works that reflect the beauty, ecology, and history of the Marsh as well as serve as a sales venue for our many talented local artists. This past year, Yvonne Kern (paintings), Rich Ridenhour (photos), Louise Bacon-Ogden (drawings), Mike Anderson (photos)/Leslie Anderson (drawings), Susan Bornstein (paintings), Anita Punla and Friends (knitted creations), Jamie Ford (photos), and Linda Parkinson (paintings) were featured. Leslie Anderson organized receptions for many of the artists.

Publicity & Communication: We would like to thank newspapers, radio, and TV stations for helping us get the message out about our weekly tours, docent training, art receptions and exhibits, and other special events at the Marsh. FOAM continues to publish its quarterly newsletter, UPWIND, which is mailed to an average of 250 addresses throughout the US. Anyone can receive a free issue by signing the guest book with a full address.

City Relations: In December, FOAM was one of 11 nonprofit groups recognized by the City of Arcata for its "community service toward stewardship of Arcata's watersheds."

FOAM continued its partnership with the City on work days to remove invasive plants from the Marsh. On October 24, over 30 volunteers removed fennel, teasel, and Himalayaberry on South I Street. On July 24, 18 people helped remove fennel, periwinkle, and bull thistle along South I Street and levees. Board members Katy Allen, Ken Burton, Elliott Dabill, and Sue Leskiw worked both events, which garnered Terrence McNally photos in the Arcata Eye.

FOAM funded two "Volunteer of the Year" awards, presented to Megan McCue and Colleen Russell at the October 4 Annual Meeting.

The South I Street floating dock was finally installed, with a plaque noting FOAM's financial contribution.

Membership: As of August 30, FOAM had 126 members in good standing, up 4 from a year ago. Fifty-five are Life Members, of whom five are known to be deceased and eight for whom we have no current address.

Fiscal Accounts: At the end of August 2010, FOAM had a checking account balance of \$14,262, plus a certificate of deposit for \$30,000 (vs \$11,191 and \$34,651, respectively, in August 2009). Significant expenditures incurred over the past year were a research grant to an HSU graduate student; two spotting scopes, tripods, and a digital projector for the Interpretive Center; prizes/expenses for the Student Bird Art Contest; printing and mailing UPWIND; and underwriting the cost of camp scholarships and supplies. FOAM's largest revenue sources are membership dues and donations, which have provided \$4800 during the soon-to-end fiscal year. Although FOAM is in the position of being a deficit spender, its overall financial position will allow it to operate in this manner, even without new revenue sources, for many years.

Board of Directors: Five current Board Members will be continuing: Katy Allen, Leslie Anderson, David Couch, Elliott Dabill, and Sue Leskiw. Ken Burton, Robert Rasmussen, and Janet Zich are retiring. Running for a second term is Lance Torgerson; running for a first term are Mary Burke, John Clagett, Guy Kuttner, Megan McCue, and George Ziminski. Art Barab continues as treasurer and Janet Zich as database manager.

-- Sue Leskiw, President

Plunging into Plants

By Sue Leskiw

On August 28, naturalist Jenny Hanson led an expanded plant training walk for new docents (and a few others) at the Arcata Marsh, which was attended by 17 people. Like any accomplished teacher, she told stories to move her students beyond "the name game." She started at Klopp Lake by identifying Monterey pine. She informed us that these trees that naturally occur on the central California coast to just south of Half Moon Bay had been purposely planted at the Marsh because the species was falling prey to disease in its native range. Monterey pines have bundles (fascicles) of three needles, whereas shore pine growing nearby has two.

Continuing on the path toward Mt Trashmore, Jenny pointed out bulrush, which is a significant player in the wastewater treatment process. Next came teasel, an invasive whose successful control depends upon removing it during the first year of its 2-year seed-production cycle.

Birders are familiar with the acronym "LBJ," which stands for "Little Brown Jobs" – small, nondescript birds that are difficult to tell apart. We learned that plants have a parallel acronym "DYC," which means "Darn Yellow Composites" – yellow, compound flowers that are difficult to tell apart. Many of these species produce parachute seeds that are "brilliant at getting around." Jenny told the group that there are no true dandelions (which I recall stems from the French for "lion's teeth") at the Marsh. The scientific name for common hareleaf stems from the same Latin root as rabbit ("Lago").

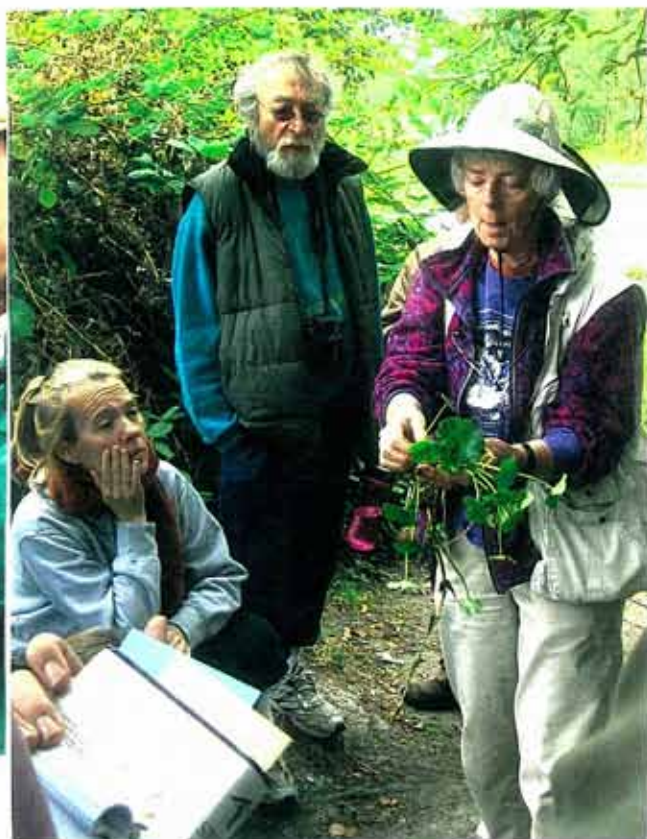
Wild radishes flower in three colors: white, pink, and yellow. The leaves of curly dock can be rubbed on insect bites to stop them from itching. Jenny relayed memory triggers to tell sedges, rushes, and grasses apart: sedges have triangular stems ("edges"), rushes are "round," while grasses have "joints" down to the ground. Poison hemlock has purple blotches on its stem, while fennel smells like anise or licorice.

Upon reaching a treatment marsh, Jenny pointed out that marsh pennywort has lots of roots, which make it efficient at removing nutrients as it floats on the water. Duckweed is the smallest floating plant. Water parsley may look like it's floating, but it is really growing just at the edge of the water.

Although the form of cordgrass (*Spartina densiflora*) growing along the slough was named after Humboldt Bay, it actually is an invasive plant from Chile. The stem exudes salt crystals. Past efforts to eradicate it have depended on labor-intensive hand pulling, but Jenny stated that recent experience has found that repeated use of a weedwhacker is effective.

Cattails that have nearly filled in No-Name Pond grow only in fresh water. The male part is at the top of the brown fuzzy "tail" and the female part is at the bottom.

Most stayed past the intended ending time for the walk and were grateful to Jenny for her vast knowledge and entertaining way of imparting it to her students. Jenny plans to offer seasonal tours to help docents identify Arcata Marsh native and invasive plants at different times of the year. Her next walk – for the general public as well as docents – will be on Saturday, October 30, from 2-4 pm, entitled "Going to Seed: Late Fall Plants at the Arcata Marsh." The event is co-sponsored by the local CNPS chapter.



Naturalist Jenny Hanson shows plants to walk attendees.
Photos by Sue Leskiw.

Seasons around the World – Fall

By Denise Homer

Sitting on a cliff edge of Hermaness National Nature Preserve feels like sitting at the edge of the world. At 60 degrees north latitude, if we traveled west, we would reach the southern tip of Greenland. Hermaness is the home of rock-throwing giants and feathered pirates on the island of Unst, Shetland. It is the most northerly point of Britain. There are no trees here, just wide-open vistas, wind, the roar of the sea on the rocks and cliffs, and the sounds and sights of seabirds. I feel as if I can hear for miles.

"Silence is not the absence of something but the presence of everything," according to Gordon Hampton, an acoustic ecologist who co-authored *One Square Inch of Silence: One Man's Quest to Preserve Quiet*.

That silence of everything is present all over Shetland. Standing at the edge of Spiggie Loch at first-light, watching the whooper swans floating serenely on the loch while Greylag geese cackled overhead, I could hear sheep for miles, along with numerous bird calls. It was a long time before I saw another human, a man walking his dog at least a mile away. In a land with no trees, there is little privacy, but a great awareness of all that is around you.

Hampton tells a story of two ways of being in nature: "In Sri Lanka I witnessed a monk leading a group of about 75 schoolchildren on a nature walk. That I saw this large group of children before I heard them was remarkable. The children were not chatting; they were not bringing another place with them. They were being in that place. Compare that to a group of mountain bikers carrying on a conversation about what happened last night at a bar while they're supposedly 'experiencing nature.' They're unconscious of their place. They are shouting because they're riding single file. Their chains are clanging. They're not part of the natural world they're traveling through. When you travel in natural harmony you attune yourself with your environment."

I spent some time on two uninhabited islands. One I hiked across the sand tom-bolo to get to and the other I had to hire a boat to take me there. No human lights, no human-made noise, just the silence of the sea, the wind, the seals, and the birds, the silence of everything. Yet both islands were once inhabited in a time before human life became so noisy. "It is our birth-

right to listen, quietly and undisturbed to the natural environment and take whatever meanings we may. Long before the noise of humankind, there was the sound of the natural world," says Hampton.

We all need time in the silence of nature. According to Hampton, the average daytime noise-free interval in our wilderness areas and national parks has shrunk to less than five minutes. He was interviewed in the September 2010 issue of *Sun Magazine*, which I read after I returned from Shetland. Hampton concludes, "To truly appreciate the need to save natural silence, you must first experience it." Having just come back from the silence of everything in Shetland, I have a deep appreciation for acoustic ecology.



Aster chilensis
California aster

Plants of the Marsh

A series by Melinda Bailey

CALIFORNIA ASTER (ASTER CHILENSIS)

Remembering back to a beginning botany lesson, you could probably come up with the two main groups of plants — dicots and monocots. Dicots have two little leaves or cotyledons, while monocots have one when they first sprout. Most flowers that we enjoy belong to the dicot group. Within this group is one that is most diverse: the composites. Composites (Compositae family) are more correctly referred to as the Asteraceae family, or for ease of remembering, the sunflower family. This amazing group has over 21,000 species worldwide divided among more than 1500 genera. Some call this group the largest plant family on Earth. (However, those folks leave out the grasses and orchids.)

This group is truly diverse. Dandelion, dahlia, thistle, and chrysanthemum are

just a few of its members. Composites can be annual, perennial, succulents, or vines of varying sizes and shapes. Often, they are invasives wreaking havoc on native ecosystems, such as ice plants (*Carpobrotus edulis*) taking over coastal dunes or star thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*) pushing out native grasses in the foothills of California. One composite worth noting at the Arcata Marsh, especially at this time of year, is the California aster (*Aster chilensis*). Although *chilensis* is named after the country of Chile, it is actually a California native plant. Aster means star-like, referring to the arrangement of the typical flower found in this group. (The newer name for this species is *Symphyotrichum chilensis*.)

Apparently one of the modifications that have allowed this group to be so successful is its unique flower arrangement. What appears to be a flower isn't a true flower, but rather a composite or bunch of flowers that has been highly modified. There are two types of flowers within the overall arrangement or inflorescence. Typically in the center are highly reduced tubular disc flowers, while radiating outward are ray flowers. These two types of flowers can be seen when one examines an aster up close. Disk flowers are bright yellow and ray flowers usually are violet, but can vary to whitish. The flower cluster sits atop a receptacle. Below this structure are bracts. The bracts of the aster are green, as are the leaves. The leaves are lance shape, sessile (attached directly on the stem), slightly hairy, and alternate up the stem. Depending on environmental factors, asters can grow 8-15 cm (25-40") tall. This purple flowering plant is pretty, but spreads easily, so be careful where planting.

Many individual members in the composite family can be difficult to identify to species, but overall easy to classify into the larger family because of the unusual flower type. Not all flowers are like aster. Some composites, like dandelions, only have ray flowers, while others like thistle just have disk flowers. They all have a unique fruit or seed historically called an achene (technically a cypsela). Dandelions, dahlias, asters, and many others have feathery projections at the base of the achene that allow them to be blown and dispersed by the wind — another adaptation that has allowed this group to prosper. California aster prefers a coastal environment and can be found from southern British Columbia to southern California. It is the most common aster found in California and the only one at the Arcata Marsh.



1st Place, Most Creative, Ananda Jones,
Grade 3, Laurel Tree Charter School

OCTOBER ARTISTS SNOWY PLOVER ART CONTEST WINNERS

In May, Friends of the Dunes (FOD) and Redwood Region Audubon Society collaborated to hold a Western Snowy Plover art contest for 3rd and 4th graders in Humboldt County. Prior to the contest, FOD visited participating classes and gave a fun, interactive presentation about the threatened shorebird. Students from seven schools around the county participated, with a special focus on schools near beaches where plovers nest. The contest — which included Most Life-like, Most Creative, Best Habitat, and Best Message categories — was timed to coincide with the bird's breeding season, which is from March through September.

The project was funded by Audubon California with a grant provided by the Toyota Together Green program. Contest winners were announced in June and all 140 entries were displayed at a showing at the Mad River Biologists office during the June Arts Alive! event in Eureka.

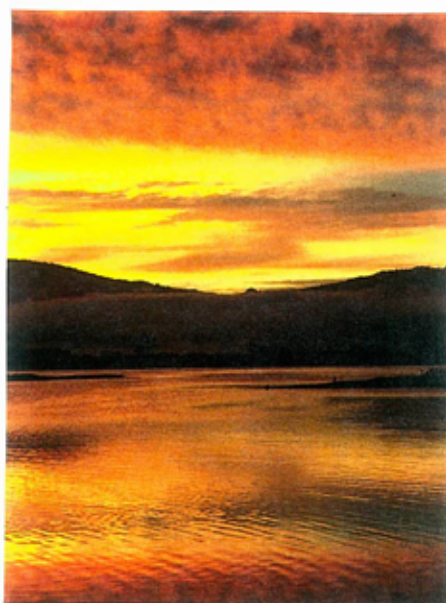
First-, second-, and third-place winners in each category will be shown at the Interpretive Center. Winning artwork is being fabricated into outreach signs that will be posted this fall at local beaches where plovers nest. For a list of all winners and honorable mentions, visit www.friendsofthedunes.org and click on the "Nature & Science" link.

Visitor Log

The Interpretive Center had 1972 visitors in June, 2011 in July, and 2050 in August.

NOVEMBER ARTISTS HSU SCIENTIFIC DRAWING CLASS

Professor James Moore was born in Chico, CA. He received his BFA and MFA from Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. Moore's work is included in many public collections, including Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Jose Museum of Art, and Tacoma Art Museum. He has been a professor at HSU for many years. In his scientific drawing class, Moore has instructed students with backgrounds in art and science. The class combines the disciplines of technical precision and biological accuracy to produce pleasing representations of nature.



DEC/JANUARY ARTIST MICHAEL VAN DEVENDER

Michael Van Devender is a biomedical technician at St Joseph Hospital who is also a nature lover and avid photographer. He has lived on the North Coast since 1976 and in Arcata for the past 15 years. His photos have been shown at

Arcata Exchange and Rocking Horse for Arts Arcata, numerous times at Healthsport, and most recently at Redwood Memorial Hospital. "The Arcata Marsh is one of my favorite places to take pictures. Some of my most spectacular sunrise photos have been taken there. It is a wonderful asset for our community, our beautiful bay, and all the wildlife it supports." Michael's other pursuits include fishing, racing Kinetic Sculptures, and gardening.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

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

October — Snowy Plover student art contest winners, sponsored by Friends of the Dunes and Redwood Region Audubon
October 12 — lecture by Mary Burke, 6:30-7:30 pm (see page 1)

October 14 — FOAM Board Meeting, 6:30-8 pm

October 19 — Twilight Walk with Denise Homer, 6 pm (see page 1)

October 26 — lecture by Matt Hurst, 6:30-7:30 pm (see page 1)

October 30 — "Going to Seed" plant walk with Jenny Hanson, 2-4 pm, co-sponsored by California Native Plant Society

November — HSU Scientific Drawing Class exhibit (professor James Moore)

November 11 — FOAM Board Meeting, 6:30-8 pm

November 25 — Thanksgiving Meander with Art Barab, 10 am (see page 1)

December/January — photos by Michael Van Devender

December 9 — FOAM Board Meeting, 6:30-8 pm

December 11 — Invasive Plant Work Day at the Marsh, 9 am-1 pm (see page 2)

January 1 — New Year's Day Ramble with Jenny Hanson, 2 pm (see page 1)

January 13 — FOAM Board Meeting, 6:30-8 pm

February 10 — FOAM Board Meeting, 6:30-8 pm

Recognition & Thanks, July-September 2010

- **Best Friends:** Gloria Baxter; Ryan Sexton Family (Roanoke, IN); Wild Birds Unlimited (Santa Rosa)
- **Sponsors:** Katy & Tom Allen; Pam & Bruce Kessler; Fred Leissler (Reno); Patty Siering & Mark Wilson; Gretchen Stadler & Family; Bill & June Thompson
- **Friends:** Mark & Melinda Bailey; Richard & Chris Beresford; Mary Burke; Harvey & Jeannette Carroll; Karen Cunningham (Coos Bay); Bruce Dickmeyer Family; Lilyan Haigh; Guy Kuttner; Lucille Martin; Megan McCue; Sue & Archie Mossman; Florine Smith; Gwen Thoele; George Ziminsky
- **Donors:** \$100 from Boyd & Dorothy Osgood; Houck Memorial donations from Linda Doerflinger, Mary Ann Hart, Robert Rasmussen, and Rich Ridenhour; \$140 from Anita Punla, proceeds from knitted art show at Interpretive Center

