



# UPWIND

from the Arcata Marsh  
Interpretive Center  
Vol 13, Issue 2, Spring 2006

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## FOAM Receives Over \$2000 from Great Battery Roundup

By Sue Leskiw

County residents turned in 2063 expired car batteries during the AAA Great Battery Roundup April 12-22. This tremendous return landed Humboldt the top spot of any area for the third year in a row in this nationwide program sponsored by the American Automobile Association (AAA). The California AAA selected FOAM and the Manila Community Center as the local recipients of a \$2 per battery donation. The two nonprofit groups will split \$4126 to support their educational and environmental efforts.

This is the fifth year that the Roundup has been held in Humboldt County. Last year, 2135 batteries were collected, while the turn-in for the previous three years totaled 2730.

This year's top collection site was Humboldt Sanitation in McKinleyville with 295. A new collection site in Willow Creek, Buddy's Auto Repair, came in a close second at 268. The battery numbers collected at the other participating locations were: Eureka Community Recycling Center, 209; McLaughlin & Sons (Orleans), 203; Clyde's Towing (Fortuna),



Judy McKinley, AAA Area Manager (second from left) presents checks for \$2063 to Sue Leskiw of FOAM (left) and Bev Prosser of the Manila Community Center (third from left). Also shown: Louise Jeffrey, Humboldt Co Waste Reduction Coordinator.

174; Tetrault Tire & Auto Service (Eureka), 156; Manila Community Center, 144; Arcata Community Recycling Center, 129; Trinidad Recycling, 122; NAPA 101 Auto Parts (Rio Dell), 82; Pacific Towing (Eureka), 61; Perigot Park (Blue Lake), 58; Frank's Garage (Willow Creek), 53; California Conservation Corps (Fortuna), 38; Mac's Towing (Ar-

cata), 20; City of Arcata Corporation Yard, 15; The Lube Rack (Eureka), 13; The Farm Shop (Ferndale), 12; and Redwood Towing (Redway), 11.

The Great Battery Roundup is a statewide program sponsored by AAA's Outdoors Corps that supports local nature centers and environmental groups.

## 2005-06 Board of Directors

### Officers

President: David Couch (also Special Events) — 839-4253

Vice-President: Patty Siering (also Exhibits) — 476-0732

Secretary: Janet Zich (also Webpage) — 822-4660

### Other Board Members

Leslie Anderson (Website) — 822-6444

Caitlin Collings (Education; Publicity) — 822-7803

Sean Craig (Habitat Concerns; Webpage) — 839-2640

Gwen Thoele (Education; Exhibits) — 826-1556

Richard Vincent (Saturday Tour Coordinator; Art Exhibits) — 822-2577

Jeffrey White (Education/WOW; Webpage) — 825-8567

### Other Volunteers

Treasurer: Art Barab (also Exhibits) — 826-7017

Sue Leskiw (UPWIND Editor; Exhibits; Webpage) — 442-5444

Anne Weiss (Membership) — 840-0938

## Board Members Needed!

Two slots are currently open and could be filled by appointment. Three others will begin in October.

If you've wondered about a new way that you can help the Arcata Marsh, here's your opportunity. Board members are expected to attend monthly meetings and serve on at least one committee.

A self-nomination form and description of officer and committees appear on pages 5-6. The deadline for submitting applications is August 21. To discuss before applying, call David Couch at 839-4253.



## Student Bird Art Contest Results

By Sue Leskiw

More than 325 local K-12 students pulled out paints, pencils, pastels, or paste to enter the Third Annual Student Bird Art Contest held in association with Godwit Days. FOAM co-sponsored the competition with Redwood Region Audubon Society. All art was displayed at the Arcata Community Center during the Festival, and copies of the winners were hung at the AMIC during May.

The number of monetary prizes was increased to 24, plus 20 honorable mentions were selected. Judges were Louise Bacon-Ogden, Sue Leskiw, Marsha Mello, Angie Schwab, Sara Starr, and Gwen Thoele.

The winners were:

### Kindergarten/Grade 1

- 1st: Nicole Quigley, Dow's Prairie School, Bald Eagle
- 2nd: Brittany Anderson, Dow's Prairie School, Bufflehead
- 3rd: Tori McConnell, Mattole Valley School, Wood Duck

### Grade 2

- 1st: Natalie Opalach, Sunset School, Anna's Hummingbird
- 1st: Rebecca Schallon, Dow's Prairie School, Marbled Godwit
- 2nd: Mattie Stivers, Northcoast Learning Academy, American Goldfinch
- 2nd: Jayclyn Dean, Dow's Prairie School, Great Egret
- 3rd: Aidan Carter, Fuenta Nueva, Bufflehead
- 3rd: Tayla Spannaus, Morris School, Anna's Hummingbird

### Grade 3

- 1st: Katie Fountain, Monart Drawing School, Marbled Godwit
- 2nd: Emily Torquemada, Pacific Union School, Swallow
- 3rd: Nick Thomas, Dow's Prairie School, California Quail

### Grades 4 & 5

- 1st: Lindsay Paldino, Norman Ambrosini Elementary, Bald Eagle
- 1st: Sheifa Punla-Green, Big Lagoon School, Great Blue Heron
- 2nd: Gabriella Wotherspoon, Fortuna Middle School, Tufted Puffin
- 2nd: Marijka Gregory, Home Schooled (Castle Rock Charter), Marbled Godwit
- 3rd: Daniel Medina, South Fortuna Elementary, Bald Eagle and Wood Duck
- 3rd: Hudson Ashby, Home Schooled, Marbled Godwit



### Grades 6 & 7

- 1st: Tessa Opalach, Sunny Brae Middle School, Wood Duck
- 2nd: Gregory Arena, St Mary's School, American Avocet
- 3rd: Tyler Conrad, Junction Elementary, Pileated Woodpecker

### Grades 8-12

- 1st: Lauren Tompkins, Home Schooled, Snowy Plover
- 2nd: Ainsley Stivers, Eureka High, Varied Thrush
- 3rd: Anastazia Llewellyn-Rada, Zoe Barnum High, Anna's Hummingbird

### Honorable Mentions

Casimir Arbayo, Elias Atkinson, Sundara Griffiths, Moriah Guthrie, Andrew Hancock, Jake Hanson, Leeann Jensen, Shelby Jones, Houston Knox, Anna Ladd, Skyler McDonald, Jake Navarre, Hailey Peterson, Wyatt Rohn, Jessica Schallon, Samantha Schallon, Mette Snejstrup, Ellie Titus, Kenne Wiese, and Bryanna Williams.

## FOAM Comments on Homeless Shelter Siting

By Patty Siering

In March, the FOAM Board sent a letter to the City of Arcata commenting on the possible relocation of the Endeavor Center and construction of a temporary homeless shelter on South G Street.

FOAM asked the City to consider alternative locations for the project, stating that "the proposed South G Street location is inappropriate because of impacts on the wetland ecology, wildlife habitat, tourism, and use of the marsh as an educational venue... Homeless encampments have long been a problem at the Arcata Marsh, and we fear that a nearby shelter will exacerbate this problem. While we recognize that many homeless are wonderful, decent human beings, we also acknowledge that others suffer from mental and substance abuse disorders that lead to problems."

"Increased homeless traffic in the Marsh will certainly lead to more trash, excrement, and off-trail use that will profoundly affect the wetland ecology and wildlife habitat. The AMWS attracts a large numbers of visitors (~18,000 in 2004) and hosts school groups from pre-school to college. We fear that increased homeless traffic in the Marsh will reduce tourism and our educational effectiveness....The AMWS can not relocate."



## Eelgrass Master's Thesis Presented

By Sue Leskiw

Former FOAM board member Ginger Tennant presented her Master's Thesis on "Experimental Effects of Ammonium on Eelgrass (*Zostera marina* L.) Shoot Density in Humboldt Bay, California." After graduating from HSU in May, Ginger is on her way to study more eelgrass in the Restoration Ecology Department at the University of Washington.

In 2004, Ginger was the first student recipient of FOAM's research grants, awarded \$400 to support her eelgrass studies under the tutelage of Dr. Frank Shaughnessy in the Department of Biological Sciences. A sparse eelgrass population exists in North Bay, while South Bay has a significantly greater shoot density. One of her research objectives was to experimentally determine if the variation in shoot density is caused by either ammonium limitation or toxicity.

Ginger took monthly water samples and sediment cores to measure ambient conditions in the water column and sediment of Humboldt Bay. She applied ammonium/phosphate fertilizer to examine the effect on eelgrass metrics. She determined that the differences in density were not due to ammonium limitation. High levels of phosphate in North Bay indicated that phosphate, not ammonium, was toxic to the plants. She also found that light levels may be impacting density.

A complete copy of Ginger's thesis is available in the FOAM library.



### Goodbye, Ginger & Julia

FOAM board members Ginger Tennant and Julia Heath have left the area, Ginger to study for a Doctorate at the University of Washington, Julia to return home to the Sierra Foothills. In Seattle, Ginger will continue her research on eelgrass (see article above). Her work on docent training and Godwit Days children's activities will be sorely missed. Julia was very active in Wetlands on Wheels (WOW) and had started tackling design of a FOAM website. We wish both of them all the best.

## FOAM Testifies on Behalf of AMWS Before Water Board

By Sue Leskiw

On May 17, the City of Arcata had a hearing before the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). The hearing concerned whether the City would be liable for \$306,000 in assessed penalties stemming from treated effluent from the Arcata Treatment Works discharged into Humboldt Bay. The violations were technical and did not degrade or affect beneficial uses of the Bay.

Karen Diemer, interim director of the Environmental Services Department, explained that the violations were mainly due to the City's innovative marsh treatment system: its open wetlands attract birds and other wildlife that create waste products, while algae in the ponds may reduce the dissolved oxygen content.

The City asked FOAM to explain to the RWQCB the additional values - recreation, education, wildlife enhancement - that the AMWS brings to Arcata. Sue Leskiw prepared a statement, most of which is reproduced below. Former FOAM board member Darlene Marlow - the self-anointed "Princess of Poop" (stemming from her frequent reading of the book *Everybody Poops* to young children touring the Marsh) also appeared.

"Every year when I write a Statistics article for FOAM's quarterly newsletter, it includes the same statement: 'Visitors signing the Interpretive Center logbook hailed from all 50 states, plus between 10 and 15 foreign countries.' The Arcata Marsh contributes to Humboldt County's prestige as an ecotourism destination. It has been written about in *Smithsonian*, *Audubon*, *National Geographic*, even United Airlines in-flight magazine.

Visitors to the AMIC increased from 6000 in 1995 to over 19,000 in 2005 - and that number severely underestimates usage of the Marsh, since it tallies only those who come into the building.

Through special request tours, several thousand people a year - many of them school children, but also community groups - are educated about the Marsh by FOAM docents and city staff.

While birds are often the focus of Marsh tours, other walks have emphasized history, ecology, plants, butterflies, oysters, mudflats, and even the full moon! One Saturday per month, FOAM sponsors a wastewater treatment plant tour. Redwood Region Audubon Society has led a weekly bird walk at the Marsh since March 6, 1982!

The Arcata Marsh is not only a sanctuary for wildlife - over 270 species of birds have been sighted in its ponds, marshes, mudflats, and uplands - but for people. Its 4.5 miles of trails were voted the Best Place to Walk or Jog in a contest sponsored by the *Times-Standard* newspaper.

The Arcata Marsh serves as a model for alternative wastewater treatment methods. Engineers from around the world can come see a marsh process in action and possibly implement a similar system where they live. One speaker at the 20th anniversary celebration of Arcata's wastewater victory, held in 1999, claimed that 800 low-tech projects have been implemented in the US and the world based on the Arcata Marsh model.

The Arcata Marsh is a favorite research location for HSU students. Over the past two years, FOAM has funded research grant awards that supported five student projects associated with the Marsh.

The Arcata Marsh serves as an inspiration to artists, photographers, and poets. Many of their creations are featured in a monthly exhibition sponsored by FOAM.

The Arcata Marsh was the first wetland that the Coastal Conservancy restored. Its overlay of multiple uses serves as a shining example of what a community can do with a former plywood mill and landfill: wastewater treatment, wildlife sanctuary, park.

The Arcata Marsh has many social and environmental benefits and, to quote HSU professor Bob Gearheart, 'gives a soft edge to the urban experience.' The Arcata Marsh is a part of the community that brings joy, a place for fish and birds, for kids to run around and wonder.

Thank you for letting me share these values of what we call The Magic Marsh with you today."

However, the RWQCB denied the City's petition and ordered the payment of \$297,000 in fines, half of which could be put toward an environmental project.

### THANKS, GODWIT HELPERS

Volunteers who staffed the FOAM booth at the Godwit Days Festival in April were Art Barab, Bev Post, Gwen Thoele, Richard Vincent, and Janet Zich. Caitlin Collings, Inges, Kai and Julie Neander, and Ginger Tennant welcomed families for art and nature activities. Leslie Anderson and Art Barab helped hang the Student Bird Art entries. FOAM thanks you all!



## Seasonal Changes Around the Marsh — Spring

By Denise Homer

The past few weeks of spring have had daily delights. One morning started with the sun. As I stepped onto the Interpretive Center porch, something darted over the edge. It had been lying in a sunbeam and looked roughly the size and shape of a salamander. Hmm, I wonder, salamanders don't usually sunbathe. I went inside and checked back ten minutes later. Sure enough, there was the sunbather: a Western Fence Lizard. Although I knew that they live in the marsh, they are seldom seen. When it was time to put out the open signs, I moved very slowly, keeping my shadow away from the lizard so as not to disturb it this time.

A couple of sunny days brought another treat: dragonflies! The dragonflies are a month or two behind across California this year. Dragonflies are basically solar powered. The water has to get warmed up for a day or two for the nymph to emerge into a dragonfly. One day last week, as I headed towards the parking lot at noon, the air was suddenly full of tiny damselflies and large dragonflies.

The Red-necked Phalaropes have been around for a couple of weeks. I could actually see them through the scope from the Interpretive Center in Allen Marsh daily. Looking like tiny whirling dervishes, they spin in circles to bring food up to the surface. The choreography was fascinating as I watched 38 of them spread out in a straight, whirling line and then move into groups, only to stretch back out in a line, all the while spinning in circles.

As I walked past the pilings in Butcher's Slough, I noticed a pair of Black-capped Chickadees going back and forth from the willows to the pilings. What were they up to? They seemed to disappear into a piling. Odd. I didn't think there were any holes in the pilings,



but I couldn't see where it was they were disappearing. I began to calculate: what angle did I need to find to see the back side of that post? When I got back to the Interpretive Center, I got the scope out and found the hole! It was excavated by the chickadees, which are most likely nesting there.

Watching spring unfold this year is a great adventure with daily installments. As Helen Keller said, "Life is either a great adventure or nothing." The choice is ours.

## Plants of the Marsh

A series by Melinda Bailey

### Saltbush (*Atriplex patula*)

Much of what makes the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary unique is its proximity to Humboldt Bay. The original scope of the bay and its surrounding tidal flats was much greater than what you see today. Levees were built, bottom lands filled in, and no one really knows how much these changes affected the salt marsh plant community found here.

Salt is a compound that is toxic to plants. Julius Caesar ordered the crops of conquered enemies to be doused with salt, so that nothing would grow again. Species composition and zonation in the salt marsh are governed by the amount of salt present, combined with the amount of intertidal exposure.

This time of year, in the upper reaches of the salt marshes where tidal intrusions are rare, you can find small islands of the endangered Humboldt Bay Owls-Clover. More common plants in this community include pickleweed, cordgrass, jaumea, and saltbush, which seem to flourish in poor soils.

One plant easily overlooked is saltbush. Since it is an annual, it dies back every year and new plants emerge in the spring. This plant is relatively inconspicuous, until you begin looking for it, then you see it everywhere. It creeps along poor soils and is rarely erect. It is best identified by lanceolate to arrow-shaped leaves that usually alternate up the stem. However, saltbush's structure is extremely variable. The leaf margins range from smooth to coarsely toothed; upon closer inspection, you may see that the leaves begin opposite to one another at the base and become alternate towards the top. The leaves can be on a stalk or stalkless. Before saltbush matures, there is a powdery film on its light green leaves that later in the year turn reddish. The stems can also be reddish in color.



*Atriplex patula*  
Saltbush

In regard to our local variety, the name saltbush is misleading, since it is not woody and only grows about 20-80 cm tall. Other members of this genus of about 250 species can form shrubs. Tiny green flowers cluster at the ends of branches or in the axils of leaves, and can be seen, if you look closely, throughout the summer months. The plant is monoecious, so both female and male flowers are present, which can be mixed within the inflorescence. Often, the male flowers are above the female flowers. The seeds are enclosed by two lance-shaped bracts.

*Atriplex patula* is perhaps more aptly described by some of its other common names, such as spearscale, orache, and spear orache. It needs an alkaline soil of pH 6-9 and is often considered a weed. This particular species is widespread throughout Eurasia, from Alaska down along coastal California, and throughout the northeastern United States. It is edible and in Europe, is one of the best-known wild greens. It belongs to the same family as spinach (Chenopodiaceae, or Goosefoot) and can be used in the same way. However, you never want to eat it in large quantities due to the oxalate salts.

## FOAM T-SHIRTS

Show your support for FOAM by purchasing one of these short-sleeved cotton T-shirts. Comes in three colors —light blue, light green, and light gold. The back features a large, 3-color rendition of the FOAM marsh wren on cattail logo. The logo repeats in a smaller, black version on the front. Available for \$12 plus tax in the AMIC bookstore.



## JUNE ARTIST SUSAN FOX

My favorite subject matter is the natural world, especially animals. I drew them all the time as a child, so I feel that in a sense I have gone full circle in making them my focus. I am endlessly intrigued by the pure design possibilities of their various forms. It might be the structure of a body, a pattern of markings, or the curve of a horn. Capturing the unique essence of each individual is a never-ending, satisfying challenge.

I work in a traditional oil technique, always striving for a personal, painterly expression. Fieldwork to see my subjects in their own habitat is extremely important. My travels to accomplish this have included multiple trips to Yellowstone National Park, two trips to Kenya, and one to Mongolia. I take many photos (over 4000 in 16 days my last trip to Kenya) and sketch on location as much as possible.

Finally, I am interested in doing my part to ensure that there will always be animals to draw and paint in an ecologically sustainable world. My own experience suggests to me that many mammals, at least, are both sentient and conscious. Perhaps one thing my paintings can do is demonstrate how much there is to lose in a world where human pressure is causing more extinction and habitat destruction than at any time since the age of the dinosaurs. The natural world has an intrinsic value separate from any human economic ones. Communicating that value is one of my goals as an artist.

## Four Seasons of Birding Brochure Back in Print

FOAM donated \$100 toward reprinting this guide to year-round birding in Arcata and beyond, which was unveiled at Godwit Days. A panel of the brochure - featuring artwork by Gary Bloomfield - is dedicated to the Arcata Marsh, including a listing of FOAM's Saturday 2 pm tour. Copies are available at the AMIC or by sending a self-addressed business-size stamped envelope to Sue Leskiw at 5440 Cummings Rd, Eureka CA 95503.

On the subject of brochures, board member Leslie Anderson has performed an overdue makeover on the FOAM membership brochure. Updates have been incorporated and wonderful photographs by Leslie and her husband liven up the copy. Thank you, Leslie!

## JULY ARTIST ALAN JUSTICE

I began to pursue photography full-time in 1999 after a career in medical research. There is a magnificent variety of subjects to photograph and to learn about in the West, such as Big Sur, the Sierras, the red rock canyons of Utah, the rainforests of the Olympic Peninsula, and the deserts of Arizona, to name just a few.

I moved to Crescent City from the San Francisco Bay Area in 2001 because of the endless possibilities for photography here. With the beautiful coast, rivers, wildlife, and redwood forests, there is enough to keep me busy for years to come.

I photograph just about anything in nature, including animals, landscapes, mushrooms, and wildflowers, but I especially like elk and birds. I also like macro photography, because it opens up a world that most people never really see.

I originally just sold to magazines, but then began branching out in order to sell prints. I joined the Crescent Harbor Gallery in 2002, and am now its president. I use Canon EOS cameras with slide film. All photos are printed and mounted so as to last for many decades.

This spring, AMIC visitors signing the guest book hailed from Alaska, Arizona, California, Georgia, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Vermont, and Washington, plus Germany and Canada. One noted that s/he was on a "yearly refresher visit from SoHum," while another waxed poetic: "I beheld beauty. Thank you." HSU Graduation Day and the following Mother's Day brought many people out to the Marsh.

## Science Fair Award Winner

The winner of FOAM's first award at the Humboldt County Science Fair for the best project dealing with wetlands was Pavlina Crowley of Kneeland. Her project examined water quality in various regions of the United States, comparing the extent of contamination in rural and urban sources. The \$50 prize was awarded in March at Humboldt State University. In her thank-you letter, Pavlina wrote: "Receiving this award from such a well-known and respected source makes it especially meaningful to me," and added that she would like to do a project next year on how marshes purify water. FOAM judges were Sean Craig, Julia Heath, and Sue Leskiw.

## Visitor Log

The AMIC had 1143 walk-in visitors during January, 1529 in February, 1553 in March, and 1861 in April.

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

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

June --- paintings by Susan Fox

June 8 --- FOAM Board Meeting, 6:30-8:30 pm

July --- photographs by Alan Justice

July 13 --- FOAM Board Meeting, 6:30-8:30 pm

August 10 --- FOAM Board Meeting, 6:30-8:30 pm

August 21 --- Deadline for Board member applications

September 14 --- FOAM Board Meeting, 6:30-8:30 pm

October 1 (tentative) --- FOAM Annual Meeting & Luncheon

## Recognition & Thanks, January-April 2006

- **Best Friends:** Ron & Melanie Johnson
- **Sponsors:** Curtis Canaday (San Francisco); Frances Madrone; Nancy Reichard; Strictly for the Birds; Jeffrey White
- **Friends:** Luther Cobb & Mary Mahoney; Kathryn Corbett; Neil & Esther Gilchrist; Lucille Martin; Mary McNelis; Carol Moné; Susan O'Connor & Tim Crlenjak; Beverly Post; Renay Radniecki (Crescent City); Isabel & Baby Sister Smith (LaJolla); Stephen Stamnes; Richard Vincent; Lucille Vinyard; John & Ann Marie Woolley; Janet & Art Zich
- **Donation in Memory of Mildred Moore** from Dale Echigoshima (Bellevue, WA); **Additional support** from Susan Barnstein; **Matching Gift** from IBM for Steven & Carol Pearson