



# UPWIND

from the Arcata Marsh

Interpretive Center

Vol 16, Issue 3, Summer 2009

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## Why Wouldn't YOU Make a Good FOAM Board Member?

We are looking for at least 1 FOAM member (or person willing to join the organization) who cares about the Arcata Marsh & Wildlife Sanctuary and would like to translate that feeling into action. If you've wondered about a new way that you can help the Marsh, here's your opportunity! Board members are expected to attend monthly meetings and serve on at least one committee (see details, pages 3&4).

FOAM has a small membership base on which to draw. Why not attend the August 13 Board meeting, to see what it's all about? You'd be working with a great group of people to improve a place we all love. Please call me at 442-5444 to find out more.

P.S. Board applications are due no later than August 26.

*Sue Leskiw*

## Arcata Marsh Slow-Speed, Limited-Mobility Tour September 3

Have you ever wanted to go on a tour of the Arcata Marsh, but decided not to due to concerns that you couldn't keep up with the rest of the participants? Well, FOAM has a solution: a special tour geared to people of all ages with limited mobility.

FOAM historian Bob Rasmussen and long-time Marsh tour leader Art Barab - both seniors themselves - are teaming up to lead a tour on Thursday, September 3 starting at 2 pm. Both men know lots about the history, ecology, and birds of

the Marsh and will be happy to answer all your questions.

No advance registration is required for this free tour. Just show up at the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center on South G Street by 2 pm. The length of the tour will depend on the desires of participants, but is expected to take 60-90 minutes. The paths at the Marsh are surfaced and level in the areas to be covered during the tour. Wheelchair-bound participants need to provide their own attendants. Loaner binoculars are available at the front desk.

If you have questions, call the Interpretive Center at 826-2359.

## 2008-09 Board of Directors

### Officers

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

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

*Secretary:* Janet Zich (also Membership; Website, Bylaws) — 822-4660

*Treasurer:* Art Barab (also Saturday Tour Coordinator; Exhibits) — 826-7017

### Other Board Members

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

Ken Burton (Habitat Concerns; Education) — 825-1124

David Couch (Special Events; Bylaws) — 839-4253

Robert Rasmussen (Education; Bylaws) — 822-5305

Lance Torgerson (Education) — 826-1525

## Annual Meeting & Volunteer Appreciation Lunch Oct 4

FOAM members and volunteers are invited to attend FOAM's 15th Annual Meeting on Sunday, October 4, at the Interpretive Center beginning at noon.

Following lunch, FOAM will hold its annual business meeting, where ballots will be counted and election results tabulated. The annual report and Volunteer of the Year awards also will be presented.

## Summer Seed Collection & October 17 Work Day

FOAM and the California Native Plant Society are for the third year cooperating to collect native seeds for use at the Marsh. The two target species are gumplum and hairgrass. Some will be planted on Mount Trashmore and some will be used to revegetate the Klopp Lake levee, which is just starting to be rebuilt.

FOAM habitat committee chair Ken Burton, referring to past seed plantings, asks "Have you had a look at Mount Trashmore lately? Someone has said it looks like a Monet painting! True, it's still dominated by exotics and the blackberry is re-sprouting, but there are patches of hairgrass and rush here and there and the aster is coming..."

If you are interested in helping with this project, attend the orientation session on Saturday, August 8 at 10:30 am. Meet Clare Golec at the parking area at the northwest corner of Mount Trashmore. She will describe what the two plants look like, show you where to find them, and discuss the optimal timing for seed collection.

On Saturday, October 17, FOAM is co-sponsoring a work day at the Marsh. Volunteers will remove invasive plants like anise along South I Street from 9 am to 1 pm. Meet at the first I Street parking lot in from Samoa Boulevard. Dress to get dirty and bring work gloves. The City will provide tools, bags, drinks, and snacks. To help, call Dennis at 825-2163.

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## Docent Training This Fall?

As this issue went to press, education committee member Elliott Dabill was still planning FOAM's fall docent training session. The program may be a subset of Friends of the Dunes volunteer training, with an additional day focused on the Arcata Marsh. For those of you who are "chomping at the bit" to lead Marsh tours, Saturday tour coordinator Art Barab may be able to offer individualized instruction. Call the Interpretive Center at 826-2351 to put your name on the list for group training or to explain your interest in receiving training outside the usual fall or spring sessions.

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## Bob & OLLI This Fall

OLLI, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, at Humboldt State is offering a beginners course in the biological basics behind current and controversial ecological topics for those interested in natural history, the out-of-doors, or in following world developments in climate change, but who lack an up-to-date technical vocabulary and academic background sufficient to inform their curiosity or their political opinions.

The course will be taught by FOAM board member Bob Rasmussen (HSU emeritus professor of botany). Bob has led tours and trained docents for FOAM, Friends of the Dunes, and Humboldt Baykeeper. His experience led him to realize that many mature people interested in the Bay, the Arcata Marsh, and the dunes lacked the biological background to appreciate the importance of these significant sites.

Dr. Rasmussen says "We will study and discuss the nature of ecosystems, factors that cause them to change, and the consequences of the changes. Species dominance and species interdependency will be explored. We will range from the microscopic to the global to get a glimpse of the future facing our progeny. I will get as basic as necessary to assure understanding. Local examples will be dominant wherever possible."

The course will consist of eight 2-hour sessions at the HSU Aquatic Center on the Humboldt Bay waterfront. Classes meet Thursdays from 3:30-5:30 pm starting September 10 (through October 29). Two field trips are being contemplated, but not yet confirmed. Registration details are available from the HSU Extension Office, 826-5880, or [www.humboldt.edu/~extended/olli/](http://www.humboldt.edu/~extended/olli/)

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## Humboldt Bay Heavy Metal, Part II, on October 8

In July 2008, Humboldt State chemistry professor Matt Hurst presented interim findings from an ongoing study of water samples from Humboldt Bay. On Thursday, October 8 at 5:30 pm at the Interpretive Center, he will relay the final results of his research. All are invited to attend this free 1-hour PowerPoint presentation.

The preliminary data, which had been collected from several sites over 2 years, examined seasonal variation in levels of what Hurst termed dissolved "macronutrients" (nitrogen, phosphorus, silicate), "micronutrients/contaminants" (zinc, copper, cobalt, cadmium, nickel, iron, manganese), and "contaminants" (lead). Hurst also collected samples at five sites in the Arcata Marsh every 2 weeks, including the oxidation ponds, treatment marshes, and bay discharge point.

The studies were performed in cooperation with other scientists from Humboldt State, the University of California at Santa Cruz, and the Wiyot tribe.

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## Break-ins = No Donation Box

Multiple break-ins at the Marsh Interpretive Center sadly have led the City and FOAM to agree to discontinue the donation box on the front desk. This means a loss to FOAM of several hundred dollars a year, as bookstore purchasers often tossed their change in the plexiglass birdhouse, or appreciative tour participants chipped in a dollar (or more) to show how much they enjoyed their experience. Donations may be mailed to FOAM at PO Box 410, Arcata CA 95518.

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## Research Grant Awarded

This spring, FOAM awarded \$1,275 to Mary Burke to support her project to assess the Arcata Marsh for carbon sequestration potential. She plans to assess each component of the wetland as a source or a sink of carbon. If the Marsh is determined to be a net sink for carbon, it could potentially be registered as a carbon offset project. Mary's advisor is Robert Gearheart, emeritus professor of environmental engineering at HSU.

Funding for this grant comes from the estate of Sylvia Fisher, who made a bequest to FOAM on behalf of her late son Marcus, who enjoyed visiting the Arcata Marsh & Wildlife Sanctuary.

NOTE: Repairs to the levees around Klopp Lake and the oxydation ponds will begin August 3 and run through November. Access to these areas will be curtailed on weekdays, as will parking along South I Street.



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## Take a Child Outside Day September 27

The North Coast's First Take a Child Outside Day will be held from 10 am to 3 pm at Sequoia Park in Eureka. Activity and information stations will be distributed throughout the park in the field, forest, and picnic areas. The celebration - part of a national program designed to break down obstacles that keep children from discovering the natural world - is being coordinated by the California Regional Environmental Education Community (CREEC), of which FOAM is a member. For more information, contact Allison at 445-4321 ext 104 or [allisonp@arcatarecycling.org](mailto:allisonp@arcatarecycling.org).

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## FOAM Plans Spartina Forum

FOAM habitat concerns chair Ken Burton is working to pull together a free public forum on control and eradication of the invasive cordgrass, *Spartina alterniflora*. The session is tentatively planned for mid-October in Arcata. A panel of experts will present on the problem, followed by audience Q&A. Entities such as the Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation, and Conservation District; the California Coastal Conservancy; the City of Arcata; and the US Fish & Wildlife Service have expressed an interest in being involved.

According to Sea Grant California, "non-native cordgrasses are an obstacle to conservation goals because they grow in areas normally unoccupied by grasses. They take hold in tidal mudflats, converting these important bird foraging grounds to salt marsh."

A final forum schedule will be disseminated via local media, or call the Interpretive Center in October.



*(Left) RRAS board member Kerry Ross (right), campers, and counselors on bird walk.  
 (Right) Kerry displays a "non-feathered friend" discovered during the bird walk.*

## FOAM Cosponsors Arcata Rec's Natural Resources Science Camp

On July 30, FOAM joined with Redwood Region Audubon Society (RRAS) for the second 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 the Arcata Recreation Department's Natural Resources Science Camp.

Nine kids arrived at the Interpretive Center at 10 am, having walked from the HSU campus. RRAS volunteers Kerry Ross and Lauren Tompkins led a 2-hour bird walk, with four Green Herons spied flying being the "Bird of the Day."

Following lunch, former FOAM board member Sean Craig led the kids on a low-tide "Mud Walk" to the Bay to collect invertebrates. After the Bay mud was hosed off the campers, FOAM board members Bob Rasmussen and Elliott Dabill joined Sean to help the students operate the microscopes and identify what they had collected, along with additional tiny critters Elliott dip netted from Allen Marsh. Highlights were witnessing the birth of tiny shrimp-like creatures and dissecting an orange sponge.

FOAM president Sue Leskiw was responsible for pulling together the schedule. She and FOAM board member Art Barab shared photographic duties.

FOAM provided \$310 to sponsor two children to attend the camp. In exchange, the students will submit an essay about their experience, which will be excerpted in the fall UPWIND. FOAM thanks all the volunteers for their contributions of knowledge and good spirits.



*(Left) Former FOAM board member Sean Craig (center), campers, and counselor squish through Bay mud to find invertebrates.  
 (Right) Campers use eyedroppers and tweezers to prepare specimens for microscope viewing.*

*Photos by Art Barab & Sue Leskiw.*



## Seasons Around the Marsh – Summer

By Denise Homer

Walking up the path to the Interpretive Center early one morning, I heard what started out as a Song Sparrow, but ended differently than I'd ever heard before. I thought "He doesn't seem to know the tune." Then, I stood right in front of him while he sang his unique "sounds-like-a-Song-Sparrow-starting-out-but-ends-up-differently" tune, which confirmed that I had the right bird and song together. It is the male Song Sparrow that does the singing. While the female does vocalize, she doesn't sing.

Carrying this puzzle around in my head for a while, I stumbled upon Donald Kroodasma's book, *The Backyard Bird-song Guide*. He talks about the practice of deep listening and suggests "Listen to song after song from a Song Sparrow male; after five to fifteen songs, he'll switch to a strikingly different tune, and eventually to another, and still another from his eight-to-ten-song repertoire. Get to know a singing male, and listen to how he interacts with his neighbors. How often does he switch songs? Does he switch when his neighbor switches? Which particular song does he sing next?"

An eight-to-ten song repertoire and this was the first time I'd noticed the difference! This summer, I'm working on my practice of deep listening.

A long-time friend who'd moved to the East Coast stopped by to see me and told me his own story of deep listening.

"One morning, a Song Sparrow was singing outside my window and woke me up early. I was really annoyed. But then, I began to listen. I realized there was a grace note at the end every time the ornamentation changed. It really it was a piobaireachd piece. The Song Sparrow was making better music than I was!"

Howdy plays the Highland Bagpipe. Piobaireachd is the traditional music of the bagpipe. It has no steady rhythm and is purely expressive. Described as a theme with variations, it is always played by a solo piper.

Kroodasma says the Song Sparrow "...begins by singing several bright notes, often sharply enunciated, that set a pleasing tone and rhythm for the two or three phrases to follow," or as Howdy noticed, a piobaireachd piece.

"I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never listen," writes Ernest Hemingway. Listen carefully. Listen deeply. This is harder than it sounds, but a rich world waits for you to hear it.

## Plants of the Marsh

A series by Melinda Bailey

### YARROW (ACHILLEA MILLEFOLIUM)

There are many white flowers with umbel-shaped inflorescences (flower arrangement) growing at the Marsh. Most of them belong to the Carrot family (Apiaceae). However, there is one that is different: Yarrow. Yarrow is a member of the sunflower family (Asteraceae). This family is well known as "the composites" and includes members such as dandelion, Senecio, and oxeye daisy (all found at the Marsh). Yarrow is complex by nature and has been the subject of extensive studies. Each inflorescence is made up of many showy, white-to-pink ray flowers, together resembling a flat-topped cluster. You may think of it as "many flowers within a flower." It likes to live in well-drained open sites such as roadsides and meadows. The leaves are green, feathery, and alternate up the stem. At the Marsh, Yarrow is frequently found on the west side of Allen Marsh near I Street.

Yarrow has been used medicinally for generations. If you take a few leaves and crush them between your fingers, you will find that it has a mild odor. It is famous for its ability to hold back blood. Externally, this is known as a styptic. In fact, the genus name, *Achillea*, honors the Greek hero Achilles, who is said to have used yarrow on the battlefield to hold back the bleeding from his many wounds. Traditionally, Yarrow has been known as a women's herb, used to ease menstruation and often applied during childbirth. Topically, it is an astringent and can help clean the skin when applied as a poultice. Internally, it is bitter and needs to be used with caution. Some peo-



ple get an allergic reaction after handling it. Yarrow can raise body temperature and bring on sweat. Over 100 active biological compounds have been found in this plant. Some Native American uses have been a gargle for sore throat, a tea for bronchitis, and a cure for diarrhea.

The leaves are medicinally strongest just before flowering, and the flowers are stronger than the leaves. Because it is bitter and astringent, most animals don't eat Yarrow, but when they do, they usually eat only the flowers. Apparently, if cows eat it, their milk tastes bitter. Its many flowers attract helpful insects such as ladybugs, bees, and butterflies and can therefore be a welcome addition to your garden. Be careful, however, as it does have the ability to take over.



### AUGUST ARTISTS SHE'IFA PUNLA-GREEN & BENJAMIN GREEN

She'ifa is 13 years old and entering Northcoast Preparatory and Performing Arts Academy this fall. She is accomplished in ballet, martial arts, piano and violin, and an avid reader and writer. She'ifa says she is "happy to be showing her pieces alongside her father, who she considers her artistic role-model... Painting with watercolors is difficult because

(continued on page 7)

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the pigment always runs and frustrates me, especially when I am working on delicate bird feathers — but my father is a good teacher and it helps me work on my patience." She is a multi-year award winner at the Godwit Days student bird art contest cosponsored by FOAM. [Editor's note: She'ifa has won either first, second, or third prize in her grade for the past 5 years of the contest, starting in 3rd grade with a Red-breasted Nuthatch.]

Benjamin Green is a self-taught, award-winning artist and writer. A member of Ferndale Arts Gallery, a local artists' cooperative, Green's work is always on display there. "I create mostly quick, impressionistic watercolor sketches that capture little things of beauty and interest — often joined with short lines of verse or prose that attempt to express the essence of an object or being... This exhibit consists of new multi-media presentations: a watercolor on black paper, torn paper collage, bird feathers, and haiku."

Father and daughter have been painting together since she was in diapers. Benjamin is glad to know his daughter considers his influence "encouraging."

## SEPTEMBER ARTIST LIBBY GEORGE

Since 1974, Libby George's work has been exhibited in solo and group shows at galleries and museums in the US and abroad, including the Morris Graves Museum of Art in Eureka; the California Museum of Art, Luther Burbank Center in Santa Rosa; the University of California, San Francisco; and the College of Art in Kumasi, Ghana. In addition, her pastels and prints are in public and private collections, including those of the Department of Interior in Washington, DC; the College of the Redwoods and the Clarke Memorial Museum in Eureka; the Save-the-Redwoods-League in San Francisco; and the Bureau of Land Management in Sacramento. George was born in Arcata and has a BA from Humboldt State.

Artist's statement: "When surrounded by the infinite beauty of the natural world, there is sudden stillness. In that moment, I am drawn into the expanse, and sense a low, nurturing hum; a voice calls to me. My pastel drawings are a recreation of that moment. Each drawing begins with a quick sketch, and later the lines are filled-in with color. The color and lines are blended together, destroying the form, and then the edges are brought back. My mind becomes still and

I work until I sense the gentle tug of nature's melody. At this point, the drawing stands on its own, becomes its own entity, and is complete.

Much of my joy as an artist comes from sharing my work with others. Viewers are drawn to my work because there has been a point of intersection in our lives. In one brief moment, there is an inner acknowledgment that we saw or experienced something in a similar way. The work reconnects us to that moment."



## OCTOBER ARTIST RICH RIDENHOUR

Coming from Sonoma County, I enrolled at Humboldt State in 1952. After receiving a BS with a major in Fisheries, I attended graduate school at Iowa State College. Returning to the west coast, I worked for two years with the Oregon Fish Commission. I then returned to Humboldt State in 1960 and spent the next 32 years there as a member of the faculty and an academic administrator. I have enjoyed retirement for 17 years.

I have often hiked Humboldt County beaches. The many shapes, sizes, textures, and colors of the driftwood has intrigued me and led to my taking pictures of pieces that have caught my eye. Some of my photographs are of singular, large objects; sometimes, they are of some detail of a larger item. I try to avoid including human and tire tracks in the pictures, as well as cut ends that detract from the natural appearance of the piece. I find the most variety and best conditions for photographing in the winter months when the driftwood is relatively fresh and not too bleached out, but oppor-

tunities abound throughout the year. This show is meant to illustrate the vast photographic resource waiting on our beaches. I hope others with better photographic skills will take advantage of these opportunities.

## Visitor Log

The AMIC had 1984 walk-in visitors during May, 1816 in June, and 2037 in July.

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

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

August — Art by She'ifa Punla-Green and Benjamin Green

August 8 — Seed collection orientation, 10:30 am, Mt Trashmore parking lot (see article, page 1)

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

August 27 — Deadline for Board of Director applications (see article, page 1)

August 30 — Reception for August artists, 2-4 pm

September — Art by Libby George

September 3 — Limited mobility tour, 2 pm (see article, page 1)

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

September 27 — Take a Child Outside Day, 10 am-3 pm, Sequoia Park (see article, page 2)

October 4 — FOAM Annual Meeting & Volunteer Appreciation Lunch, noon (see article, page 1)

October — Driftwood photos by Rich Ridenhour

October 8 — Presentation by Dr Matt Hurst, 5:30-6:30 pm (see article, page 2)

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

Mid-October — Spartina Forum (see article, page 2)

October 17 — Arcata Marsh Work Day (see article, page 1)

## Recognition & Thanks, June-July 2009

- Best Friend: Wild Birds Unlimited (Santa Rosa)
- Sponsors: Richard & Chris Beresford; Marie Kelleher-Roy; Pamela & Bruce Kessler; Sue Leskiw; Nancy Reichard; Gretchen Stadler; Catherine Walling
- Friends: Harvey & Jeannette Carroll; Bruce Dickmeyer Family; Jane Fusek; Nina Haedrich; Lance Hardie & Grace Marton; Fred Leissler; Lucille Martin; Bill & Nikki Ruff; Florine & Bart Smith; Gwen Thoele