



UPWIND

from the Arcata Marsh

Interpretive Center

Vol 16, Issue 1, Winter 2009

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March 27 Deadline for Student Bird Art Contest Entries

For the sixth consecutive year, FOAM and Redwood Region Audubon Society are co-sponsoring a Student Bird Art Contest. \$500 in prizes will be awarded to students from kindergarten through high school who submit a drawing of one of 40 selected bird species. Special prize(s) will be awarded to the best depiction of birds in their natural habitat.

Entries will be judged by local wildlife artists and educators. Winners will be announced at the opening reception of the Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival on Friday, April 17. Entries will be displayed at the Arcata Community Center during the Festival. In 2008, over 550 pieces of art were received. 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 list of 40 species. One entry per person.

Flyers with complete rules are available at the FOAM website (www.arcatamarshfriends.org).

click on Education link, then Student Bird Art Contest), the Interpretive Center, Strictly for the Birds in Old Town Eureka, or by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to Sue Leskiw, 5440 Cummings Road, Eureka 95503. 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 Ms. Leskiw. Entries must be received by Friday, March 27 to be considered.

FOAM Launches Website

After many years of discussion, and several false starts, our organization finally has a website! Please visit www.arcatamarshfriends.org to get information about our educational and community outreach efforts, as well as membership and volunteer opportunities. Still to come: a gallery of Marsh pix and pdf's of back issues of UPWIND.

FOAM Board members Leslie Anderson and Sue Leskiw took the lead on this project. Our site designer was Bob Tucker, who submitted the following biography: "A San Francisco veteran of the software and Internet boom, I returned to school in 2005 to pursue an Environmental Resource Engineering (ERE) degree at HSU. While making the switch to real-world green engineering, I help pay for school by creating right-sized websites for businesses and nonprofits. I can be reached at tucker@covad.net."

FOAM also contributed information and funding to update the Arcata Marsh website created years ago by HSU students. That site, which focuses on the wastewater treatment plant, can be accessed at www.humboldt.edu/~ere_dept/marsh. ERE professor Dustin Poppendieck oversaw the upgrade.

Spring Docent Training

In March – most likely 28-29 – FOAM will sponsor training to prepare docents to lead Arcata Marsh tours and volunteers to staff the Interpretive Center. Call the Interpretive Center at 826-2359 and leave your name, phone number, and e-mail if you are interested.

Topics will include inside lectures as well as outside walks and observation of marsh ecology, so dress accordingly. Bring a lunch; FOAM will provide morning bagels and drinks. Trainers will cover the following topics: tours and interpretation, birds, wetlands biology, plants, local history, and wastewater treatment.

2008-09 Board of Directors

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

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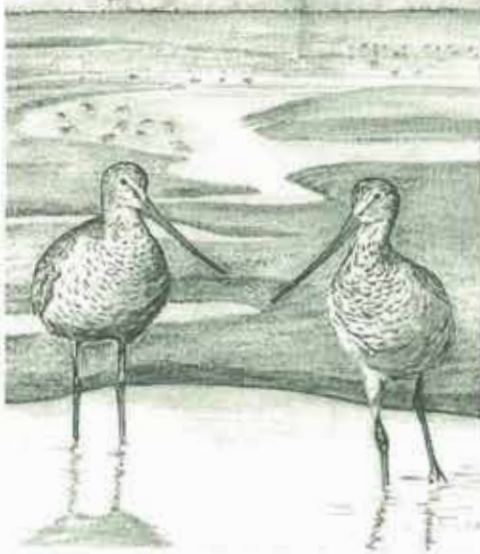
Leslie Anderson (Design; Art Exhibits; Website) — 822-6444

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

Robert Rasmussen (Education; Bylaws) — 822-5305

Lance Torgerson (Education) — 826-1525



Godwit Days Poster Art by Sara Starr

Help Needed with FOAM's Godwit Days Activities, April 17-19

The 14th annual Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival is just around the corner and, once again, FOAM will be sponsoring free family activities. The activities will be held in the Arts & Crafts room at the Arcata Community Center from 12:30 to 3:30 pm on Saturday, April 18.

The activities span all ages and interests and will include making water cycle bracelets, peanut butter pinecone birdfeeders, and fish prints. All children must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

This is a fun event for both the kids and the volunteers who staff the activity stations. If you can spend a couple of hours helping kids discover the many wonders of our marsh, call Darlene Marlow at 707-677-9242.

FOAM also needs volunteers to staff its table at the Bird Fair. Hours of operation are Friday 5-7 pm, Saturday, 10 am-5 pm, and Sunday 10 am-3 pm. If you can help hand out literature and sell items, call Janet at 707-822-4660.

As part of the Godwit Days program, FOAM board member David Couch will be leading a tour of the wastewater treatment plant on Saturday from 3-4:30 pm. The tour is offered at no charge, but pre-registration is required. Call Godwit Days registration number at 707-826-7050 to sign up.

A complete schedule of events can be seen at www.godwitdays.com.

FOAM Receives Nearly \$1200 from Great Battery Roundup

County residents turned in 589 expired car, boat, and motorcycle batteries during the Great Battery Roundup in April 2008. The Roundup is a statewide program sponsored by the American Automobile Association (AAA's) Outdoors Corps that supports local nature centers and environmental groups. The California AAA selected FOAM as the local recipient of a \$2 per battery donation. This is the seventh year that the Roundup has been held in Humboldt.

For the second year in a row, Humboldt's top collection site was Clyde's Towing in Fortuna with 116. John's Auto Wreckers (Eureka) again came in second with 85. The battery numbers collected at the other participating locations were: The Farm Shop (Ferndale), 78; Eureka Community Recycling Center, 72; NAPA 101 Auto Parts (Rio Dell), 51; Arcata Community Recycling Center, 50; City of Arcata Corporation Yard, 32; Frank's Garage (Willow Creek), 21; McLaughlin & Sons (Orleans), 20; Jackson Recycling (Orick), 18; Buddy's Towing (Arcata), 15; The Lube Rack (Eureka), 15; Pacific Towing (Eureka), 11; and Tetrault Tire & Auto Service (Eureka), 5.

The Roundup recently won California's most prestigious environmental honor, the Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award. FOAM had submitted a letter of support.

Native Seed Collection & Planting

By Ken Burton

If you've been out to the Marsh in the past few months, you've undoubtedly noticed how different Mt. Trashmore looks. As reported in the last issue of UPWIND, in October, the City mowed the entire top of the old landfill in accordance with a County mandate to prevent the establishment of woody vegetation, the roots of which could damage the landfill cap.

Following the mowing, volunteer work crews recruited by FOAM, the local California Native Plant Society chapter, the City, and AmeriCorps removed some unwanted plants that had escaped the mowing and seeded the area with native grass and herb seeds collected locally by FOAM and CNPS volunteers under the direction of Ken Burton and Carol Ralph, respectively. All those little flags out there mark the seeding locations.

We thank Carol Ralph, Lew and Judie Norton, Kate McClain, Jan Andersen, Robert Nelson, Nancy Marie, Clare Golec, Sara Lowry, Alex Aquino, Sharon Levy, Melinda Groom, Felicity Wasser, Gail Popham, Justin Lampley, Jerry LaForge, Ken Burton, Jennifer Knight, David Campbell, Maya Scanlon, and Kenji Hatchimonji for collecting seeds.

[Thanksgiving Walk photo below courtesy of the Arcata Eye.]



Decent weather (gray, but mild and calm) produced a large turnout for the 2008 Thanksgiving morning walk: 28 adults and 3 children. Surprisingly few from the group were out-of-towners. After a visit to the Log Pond, we walked the loop to Klopp Lake and the enhancement marshes, spending an hour and a half chatting about the Marsh, local history, and birds. We saw a considerable assortment of birds; nothing unusual, but many of the ducks and shorebirds one expects to see visiting the Marsh at this time. My thanks to our avian friends for their splendid showing! — Art Barab, Leader

Plants of the Marsh

A series by Melinda Bailey

POISON HEMLOCK (CONIUM MACULATUM)

Whenever I lead a local plant walk, there is one family of plants I want to make sure everyone is aware of, the Parsley or Carrot Family. The true name of this family is Apiaceae; some may know it by the order Umbelliferacea. It includes the plants Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*), Water Parsley (*Oenanthe sarmantosa*), Cow-Parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*), Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), and Poison Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*). I mention these five specifically because all of them are very common at the Arcata Marsh and are emerging from the ground this time of year. Yes, in case you didn't know, Poison Hemlock is common, and one should stay clear of it!

Members of this family are best known and recognized by the shape of their inflorescence (cluster of flowers), which is an umbel. An umbel has the shape of an up-turned umbrella where many pedicels radiate out from a common point. Strange isn't it, how members of this family like carrot, parsley, and celery can be tasty, while others are deadly? This is an important reason why people should learn to identify members of this group. There has been more than one account of someone mistaking hemlock for wild carrot or parsnip because of its tender, whitish root or anise because of its similar-appearing seeds.

Most likely the word "hemlock" is derived from the old English haelm or haem meaning "straw" or "stalk" and leac meaning "plant." The name was associated with any plant having hollow stalks like straw. Two of the most-famous poisonous members of this family are Water Hemlock and Poison Hemlock, both which contain dangerous alkaloids. The poisonous alkaloid is present in all parts of the plant and is most concentrated in the seeds. The ancient Greeks used a drink from Poison Hemlock to kill criminals. Most people have heard the famous story of how Socrates was forced to drink Poison Hemlock after being found guilty of "corrupting youth" in the year 399 B.C. Just a few drops can kill a small mammal.

Poison Hemlock is biennial, meaning it completes its lifecycle in 2 years, usually flowering in the second year. It is best identified by a hollow, smooth stem that usually has purple blotches on it. When the plant is young, the purple blotches may not be present. However, the stem

will always be smooth and hollow. The leaves are somewhat feathery in appearance because they are pinnately dissected and branch from a central stalk, forming a delicate-looking plant. As the leaves emerge from the ground, they have a sheath at the base. Flowers are small, white, and numerous. In wet years, Poison Hemlock can easily grow to 8 feet high, but 5-6 feet is more common. Poison Hemlock loves, wet disturbed places like ditches and abandoned fields. Anywhere, it is best admired at a distance.



Seasons Around the Marsh - Winter

By Denise Homer

Opening the door to the garden, I was surprised to see a furry face with a long, pointy nose and shiny, black eyes looking calmly at me from the foot of the stairs. We looked at each other in surprise for a few seconds. "Shouldn't it run from me?" I wondered. So, I stepped out on the porch and waved my arms to admonish it to "Run along." It slowly turned and walked away, showing off its prehensile tail.

It was the second time I'd seen an opossum in the garden and I wondered if I should be concerned. I knew we had opossums at the marsh, but in downtown Eureka? Out of sight, out of mind. I didn't think about opossums again until the Winter Solstice. My Tai Chi teacher holds a wonderful Winter Solstice party where her students of three different styles of Tai Chi give a demonstration of each form. Afterwards, we shared a potluck meal by candlelight and chatted. As fate would have it I happened to sit next to a woman who raises tiny little opossum orphans.

Opossums are the only North American marsupial, which means animal with a pouch to raise its young (such as kangaroos). I asked her about the opossum in my garden. "Actually, they are a really nice animal to have around because they eat rodents and all kinds of bugs, including snails and slugs. They also like over-ripe fruit, berries, and grapes. I give them grapes. They love grapes. They suck out all the juice and leave the skin behind."

The woman was so easy to talk to I told her that I liked the opossum's face, but when they turned around... "You don't like their tail?" she asked. "No," I admitted, "It looks like a big rodent." "Well, the tail is prehensile. They can pick up a bundle of leaves and take it to their nest with their tail," she informed me. They also use the tail as an aid in climbing, although they don't hang by their tail, despite numerous erroneous illustrations that show them doing just that.

When attacked, an opossum can act like it's dead ("play possum"). When I worked for California State Parks, I witnessed this firsthand. One night, I was driving down to Gold Bluff Beach to give a campfire program when I saw what looked like a very dead opossum on the side of the road. I stopped to check on it and it looked really dead. I radioed the other rangers on duty to report it. A few hours later, when I returned to the prairie, the opossum was gone. Back at the office, the other two rangers told me they went out looking for my opossum but couldn't find it. They figured it was just "playing possum" on me.

Good interpretation is sharing an enthusiasm, a passion for a topic that not only informs, but also changes the way others perceive the topic. It turned out to be a Winter Solstice I'll never forget: driving rain, Tai Chi, good food, good company, candlelight to brighten the longest night of the year, and a woman whose passion for opossums made me take a second look at what turns out to be a pretty interesting animal.





Leader Jenny Hanson (second from left), with New Year's Day Walk participants.
Photo by Sue Leskiw.

Inaugural New Year's Day Walk a Success

By Sue Leskiw

Twelve adults and two children gathered at the foot of South I Street to celebrate 2009 with a walk around the Marsh, including the new section. Naturalist Jenny Hanson led the nature hike on a day that threatened rain but stayed calm. Highlights of the day were up-close-and-personal sightings of two river otters, one in Butcher's Slough and another in a new pond in the Marsh addition.

Jenny covered the history of the Marsh, explained vegetation removal efforts on Mount Trashmore, informed people about Dr. Allen's fish-raising experiment, identified some fungi, and took a deep sniff of otter scat. Attendees Pat Bitton and Donna Wildearth added information about birds and plants, respectively, while this author gave a short talk about the native oyster project. Participants asked lots of questions and a good time was had by all.

Science Fair Award

For the fourth year, FOAM is sponsoring an award at the Humboldt County Science Fair for the best project related to wetlands. The event will be held the week of March 16 at Humboldt State University. FOAM volunteer judges will evaluate exhibits created by elementary, middle, and high school students to choose a winner of \$50.

NEEDED: One member to serve a 3-year term on the FOAM Board of Directors. Join a great group of people who care about the Marsh. Call President Sue Leskiw at 707-442-5444 to find out more!

Marsh Jeopardy Game, 1995

By Sue Leskiw

You may have noticed that the Interpretive Center was painted recently. To accomplish that in the back office/storage room, FOAM board members worked to pack up, move, and unpack many boxes of materials. I took some time to sift through old FOAM files, and discovered a few historical gems. One of them was a Marsh Jeopardy game (modeled after the Jeopardy TV show) that was part of an Advanced Docent Training session presented on January 31, 1995.

The answers are reproduced here, to allow you to test yourself about how much you know about the Arcata Marsh & Wildlife Sanctuary. Questions will be printed in the Spring UPWIND. Keep in mind, this game was produced over 14 years ago, so "facts" may have changed!

Section I. Cultural History

This clay-capped knoll used to be the community's landfill.

The remains of the first railroad ever in California.

The Wiyots ate fish, shellfish, berries, and bulbs without dispute. But gathering this particular food brought them into conflict with neighboring tribes.

Stocking area streams was the incentive behind this early 1970s facility.

McKinleyville, Eureka, Arcata, Samoa, and Manila.

The name of the group that created possibilities for an Arcata Marsh project by petitioning to have a vote on funds used for a regional sewer system.

Section II. Marsh Mechanics

This physical phenomenon provides movement of water through the freshwater marshes.

The foul odor from this place gives the Sewage Treatment Plant its tell-tale smell.

The nifty use of the screw pumps was first thought up by the people of this civilization.

This gas is a product of settled-out sludge and is reused to save energy.

These two processes must be done to secondarily treated water before it is sent into a recreational area.

The main infiltrators utilized at the very end of the water's treatment journey.

Section III. Flora & Fauna

The most commonly heard frog at the Marsh.

A bird that builds up to three nests and may practice polygyny.

A mammal that enjoys slipping, sliding, and swimming around the freshwater ponds and marshes.

An edible plant that stores excess salt in its leaf tips.

Its buds are kitten-soft catkins found along the edges of its branchlets.

Reeds, bulrush, and cattails.

Section IV. Marsh-ography

This marsh was built in 1981 from pastureland and now uses treated wastewater as its sole water source.

The only one maintained in Arcata, this place offers recreationists an access point to fish, hunt, and boat in the Bay.

The mudflats between Klopp Lake and the treatment plant.

The area that used to be a log pond.

The smallest pond, it's a favorite nesting and feeding site for ducks.

A path that is off-limits to the public.

**FEBRUARY ARTIST
DANA UTMAN**

I became interested in outdoor photography while living abroad after high school but I only decided to become serious about it seven years ago after an extended trip to Europe. Since then, I have attempted to learn how to represent the personal, emotional feeling I experienced with each image I have captured in the final print. This is the path I have chosen so that I will find my own expressive direction.

Although I have taken workshops from renowned photographers, I believe that doing the actual work is the best way to learn the art of photography. So after image capture, I edit, print, matte, and frame my own work.

Each year, I plan outdoor adventures to places that offer photographic opportunities, preferably where I have never gone before. This year, I traveled to Boston and Cape Cod for the first time, but also to the familiar landscapes of Truckee and Yosemite. Last year, I traveled in unfamiliar settings from Glacier National Park to Jasper National Park in Canada to shoot the incredible wildlife as well as the magnificent landscapes.

I am fortunate to live in a uniquely beautiful county. Humboldt Bay and the Arcata Marsh area are great settings for outdoor landscapes that surprise me constantly with new photo possibilities. I have always looked forward to another great outdoor adventure along the trails that lead around the ponds.



Egret on piling, Dana Utman



Hawk monotype, Patricia Sennott

**MARCH ARTIST
PATRICIA SENNOTT**

It always feels such an honor both to have the opportunity to paint and then to share my resulting impressions with the community. Showing my work at the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center is a special delight because visiting what we then called the "Bird Sanctuary" was the first memorable walk I took after moving here from Kentucky in 1980.

My artwork still straddles the two artistic worlds of watercolor painting and monotype printmaking. (A monotype is a one-of-a-kind, handmade print, in which I use oil-based inks and the press at the Ink People Center for the Arts, where I also teach the method.) I plan to display a selection from my current series of bird-themed monotypes, along with watercolors celebrating spring.

**APRIL ARTIST
JAY BROWN**

I have my studio/residence in Manila, where I have been inspired by the bayside sunsets and related atmospherics to create my latest series entitled "Bayscapes." In my works on paper, I enjoy portraying nature/wildlife, still-lives with a twist, humor with a point, realism with expression. I am still exploring, but am basically interested in abstraction with the influence of Oriental art, especially simple Zen ink and brush and the western artists Graves, Klee, Redon, Mondrian, O'Keefe, and others.

Visitor Log

The Interpretive Center had 1913 walk-in visitors during October, 1898 in November, 1573 in December, and 1116 in January. There were 167 docent-led tours in 2008.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

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

- February — photos by Dana Utman
- February 12 — FOAM Board Meeting, 6:30-8:30 pm
- March — watercolors and monotypes by Patricia Sennott
- March 12 — FOAM Board Meeting,
- March 28-29 — FOAM Docent Training (see page 1)
- April — paintings by Jay Brown
- April 11 — FOAM Board Meeting, 6:30-8:30 pm
- April 17-19 — 14th Annual Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival, www.godwitdays.com or 707-826-7050
- May — Winning artwork from Student Bird Art Competition (see page 1)

Recognition & Thanks, November 2008-January 2009

- **Best Friends:** Barbara Barratt; Milton Boyd; Steven & Carol Pearson (Portland); Jane Wilson
- **Sponsors:** Fred Hummel; Aldaron Laird; Marian Perry; Patty Siering & Mark Wilson
- **Friends:** Lee Albright; George & Beverly Allen; David Ledger (Redding); Robert Lockett & Adrienne Wolf-Lockett (Portland); Sheila Marks; Audrey Miller; Keith Mobbs (Brisbane); Lance Torgerson; Connie Word (Redding)
- **A special thank you to our major donors:** Calista Sullivan & Richard Sanborn (\$1000); Anonymous (\$933); Chris & Lee House-Vintage BMW House Foundation (\$250)