



# UPWIND

from the Arcata Marsh  
Interpretive Center  
Vol 32, Issue 1, Winter 23/24

**Our Mission: To stimulate understanding of the Arcata Marsh & Wildlife Sanctuary, its relationship with Arcata's integrated wastewater treatment system, the surrounding watersheds and bay, and their link with the Earth's water cycle**

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*Andrew Wolff at the Arcata Marsh.*

## Upcoming Lectures

*By Sue Leskiw*

During February, March, and April, FOAM will be hosting four lectures instead of the usual three. First up on February 5 is Andrew Wolff speaking on "Characterizing Beneficial uses of the Arcata Marsh." Andrew recently earned his Master's degree from Cal Poly Humboldt's (CPH) environmental resources engineering department. His thesis included a meta-analysis of almost 40 years of data collected at the Marsh, focusing on water quality enhancement, habitat creation, and education. Another part of his research was a survey on Marsh usage and awareness of its functions by average users, to which he received over 300 responses.

February 26 will bring a bonus lecture by Aldaron Laird, whose photo/information posters are on display until the end of February. A local environmental planner, he will speak on potential effects, vulnerabilities, and risks of sea level rise in the northern unit of the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary.

On March 5, we will hear from another CPH Master's candidate,

Lily Olmo, about her research entitled "Life Beneath the Surface: Exploring Fish in the Arcata Marsh." She spends her weekends wading to learn more about fish in human-made wetlands. Along with a team of undergraduate technicians, Lily sampled wetland ponds within the Arcata Marsh and the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge, revealing important findings about the abundance, diversity, and life histories of fish there. Lily's field work was partially supported by a FOAM research grant.

CPH wildlife professor Jeff Black will give an April 2 lecture on otters (title TBA).

Starting times are 7 pm, with talks lasting about an hour, followed by Q&A. All lectures will be simulcast on Zoom at <https://humboldt-state.zoom.us/j/88248246788?pwd=AuQSlOmC4Zwkq4hzWctlzTy-SkjKyjY.1#success> and recorded for



*Lily Olmo measures a fish caught during her research.*

uploading to FOAM's YouTube channel [<https://www.youtube.com/@foamfriendsofthearcatamarsh3798>].

## 2024-25 Board of Directors & Officers

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**Website:** [www.arcatamarshfriends.org](http://www.arcatamarshfriends.org)

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## New AMIC Staffer

By Rachael Aguirre

I'm thrilled to join the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center as the new environmental program aide. Originally from the San Gabriel Valley in Southern California, I moved to Humboldt County a little over 5 years ago to join the California Conservation Corps, a decision that would change my life and solidify my passion for working in the environmental field.

Since then, I have gone on to work with several other organizations such as Girl Scouts, the Watershed Stewards Program, Northwest Youth Corps, and most recently with the Eel River Watershed Improvement Group. My work has largely been focused on environmental conservation and restoration, crew leadership, and outdoor education. I've spent many hours building trails, eradicating invasive plants, enhancing salmonid habitat, and working with many passionate and hard-working individuals throughout California and Oregon.

While I'm not at AMIC, you may find me out listening to live music, camping, foraging, rockhounding, cooking a delicious meal, or reading a good book. It has been so lovely to meet everyone involved at the Marsh, whether they are a Board member, volunteer, or regular visitor. It feels like I learn something new every day! I'm looking forward to meeting new faces and expanding my knowledge during my time here.



## New FOAM Board Member

By Sue Leskiw

Jenn Tarlton, a lecturer in environmental education and interpretation at Cal Poly Humboldt (CPH), is now on the FOAM Board. She has jumped right in to help, by taking over hosting the Zoom stream of FOAM lectures and serving on an ad hoc FOAM committee to evaluate and improve current educational displays in the Interpretive Center (AMIC).

Jenn plans to involve her students in redesigning exhibits. The first one under consideration is the wastewater treatment process display under the long stretch of AMIC windows, which is currently non-operational.

Jenn has degrees in psychology and natural resources interpretation from CPH. She teaches courses in environmental communication, education, and interpretation. Her listing on the CPH website states "I approach teaching in the same way I approach interpreting: the main goal is to inspire others to continue a life-long process of exploring, discovering, and learning. I also believe that students need practical experiences to balance their theoretical knowledge. Humboldt is ideally situated with ... places to serve as a laboratory in which students apply what they learn in community-based projects that prepare them with skills they need to be successful in the profession."

FOAM looks forward to AMIC and the Marsh in general benefitting from the expertise of Jenn and her students.

## March 22 Deadline for Student Bird Art Contest

For the 22nd year, FOAM and Redwood Region Audubon Society are co-sponsoring a Student Bird Art Contest in conjunction with the Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival. An estimated \$650 will be awarded to Humboldt County students from kindergarten through high school who submit a drawing of one of 40 suggested species or another bird that has been seen in the County. Prizes also will be awarded for the best renditions of a bird in its natural habitat.

Awards will be presented on Saturday, April 19 at 11 am in the Main Hall of the Arcata Community Center (ACC). All entries will be displayed April 18-20. Copies of winning artwork will be shown at AMIC during May and June.

A flyer with complete rules and instructions is posted at [www.godwitdays.org](http://www.godwitdays.org) or can be picked up at the Interpretive Center. Flyers have been mailed to all Humboldt County schools.

Art may be dropped off at AMIC, 569 South G St, Tuesday-Sunday between 10 am and 4 pm and Monday 1-4 pm or mailed to Sue Leskiw, 155 Kara Lane, McKinleyville CA 95519. **Entries must be received by 5 pm on Saturday, March 22 to be judged and included in the ACC display (no exceptions).**

Questions? E-mail [sueleskiw1@gmail.com](mailto:sueleskiw1@gmail.com).

## Help Needed with FOAM's Godwit Days Activities

The 2025 Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival is just around the corner and FOAM will again be participating in free family nature craft activities. The drop-in session will be held at the Arcata Community Center on Saturday, April 19, from 11 am to 1 pm. Activities may include making Marsh critter ornaments, mini-wooden bird houses, and bird and otter masks. All children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. If you can spend a couple of hours helping kids discov-

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2024 first place winner for grades K-1  
by Fiona Varzгах.

er the many wonders of our Marsh, contact Sue at [sueleskiw1@gmail.com](mailto:sueleskiw1@gmail.com).

FOAM also needs staffers for its table at the Bird Fair. Hours of operation are Friday 3-7 pm, Saturday 9 am-5 pm (optional 5-7 pm shift), and Sunday 10 am-2 pm, divided into 2- or 3-hour shifts. If you can help hand out literature and sell items, e-mail Lynn at [lynnijo@gmail.com](mailto:lynnijo@gmail.com).

This year, FOAM again will be responsible for staffing the Opening Reception on Friday, April 18. The event is free to the general public from 5 to 7 pm. Help is needed to replenish plates of food, refill the punch bowl, collect money/tickets for and pour beer and wine, and especially wash dirty dishes and glasses! E-mail Maria at [mariacdbaron@aol.com](mailto:mariacdbaron@aol.com) if you can help.

Another volunteer opportunity is to help hang hundreds of entries received in the 22nd Student Bird Art Contest, co-sponsored by FOAM and Redwood Region Audubon Society. This will occur on Friday, April 18 starting at 1 pm. Bring a lightweight hammer and bag for push pins and be prepared to post artwork along the hallways and lobby of the Community Center. Contact Sue at [sueleskiw1@gmail.com](mailto:sueleskiw1@gmail.com).

## What's Happening at the Arcata Marsh?

By Rachael Aguirre & Heather Schmidt

One thing that remains constant is change and the Marsh is no exception to the rule. With the new year we said goodbye to AMIC staffer Neysa Budzinski. Rachael Aguirre

has shifted to working full days through our new winter hours (10 am to 4 pm). We hope that you will stop by and get to know her.

You will continue to see other changes around AMIC. We will be bringing new inventory to the bookstore, as well as slowly making changes to displays and exhibits. During the spring semester the City and FOAM will be working with students from the Cal Poly Humboldt environmental education and interpretation program to design and install a new display reflecting the updated wastewater treatment process. We are very excited to see what new ideas they will integrate into the Interpretive Center.

With spring on the horizon we at the Marsh are eager to welcome school groups on upcoming tours. Students ranging from transitional kindergarten all the way to college-aged plan to visit to learn the ins and outs of wetlands, wildlife, and wastewater treatment. We were thrilled to host our first school group of 2025 from Redwood Preparatory School in Fortuna on January 24. Group tours are free and led by knowledgeable volunteer docents. It is so impactful to see the wisdom and legacy of the Marsh carried on to the next generation of stewards.

As construction on the wastewater treatment facility continues, trail closures may be put into place. Be sure to check the City's website at [cityofarcata.org](http://cityofarcata.org) for up-to-date information. From the home page click on the *Trail/Road Closures Alert* link for details on active and planned upcoming closures.

## New Optics for Interpretive Center

By Elliott Dabill

In early January Arcata recreation supervisor Heather Schmidt got word from a Mark Wilson at the Humboldt Astronomy Club that some optical equipment was available, if the Marsh and FOAM thought the items could be useful. When Board members opened the boxes at the January meeting they found real treasures for future tours.

First up was the biggest spotting scope that I have ever seen! With a huge objective lens to gather light from even the dimmest shade trees, the scope has binocular eye pieces, focus adjustments, and other features to work from a sturdy tripod, also donated. I set it up and looked across Butcher Slough to a duck blind on Mount Trashmore, fighting the temptation to reach out at a tiny dust mote on the roof of the blind, a football field away. Wow, this thing is powerful but heavy, with several pieces to assemble, and probably only useful from AMIC.

Next, I attached 20x200 binoculars to the tripod. While these look like the binocs you have at home, they have done jail time for illegal use of steroids. You can't hold them for long to look at birds due to the weight. I saw two cormorants through the new device and they looked so close I could tell what the birds thought of each other by the merest twitch of facial muscles. This set of binocs comes with a carrying pouch and could be taken out to the field, but definitely with a tripod.

Finally, the grandad of binoculars, at 25x200. I rented a forklift and mounted them on the tripod, made balancing adjustments, and couldn't believe what came through the eyepieces. I swear I saw two Japanese women waving their national flag from the east coast of the island of Honshu! OK, I made that up, but it's the kind of exaggeration you think of when you handle the kind of binoculars I've only ever seen mounted on a US Navy ship for viewing the horizon. Although the biggest of the binoculars, they would still fit in the pouch that came with the smaller device and are portable enough to take to Klopp Lake with a tripod so that you could look at the former dock in the middle of Arcata Bay.

For an unexpected donation I have to be impressed with the match-up between the devices and the Arcata Marsh that can put them to use teaching folks about our birds or impressing youngsters with our efforts at their education. Many thanks to the Humboldt Astronomers!



Sharon and Jane Wilson at June 2018 book-signing event. Photo by Sue Leskiw.

## The Passing of Sharon Levy

By Sue Leskiw

On December 26, I received this e-mail from frequent FOAM tour leader Sharon Levy: “Sue I’m in the hospital with pneumonia. Sorry I can’t do tour Dec 28.” To have someone remember a minor thing like that is an apt illustration of Sharon’s commitment to the Arcata Marsh.

Imagine my shock when I received a message four days later that read: “Sue, This is Hugh Scanlon, Sharon’s husband. Sadly, Sharon passed away today from pneumonia, likely related to her cancer condition. She loved the Marsh. Please let her FOAM friends know. We will have a celebration of life at some point in the near future and will make sure you know about it.”

Sharon indeed loved the Arcata Marsh, so much so that she got a book published about it [“The Marsh Builders: The fight for clean water, wetlands, and wildlife”] by Oxford University Press in 2018. She often was the first volunteer to reply to my monthly calls for Saturday tour leaders. In fact, she had been leading tours at the Marsh for many years, first Audubon field trips, then for FOAM, once telling me how she used to carry her daughter Maya along in a back pack as she led field trips (Maya is now in her early 20s!).

My closest interaction with Sharon was in planning a gala event at

the Arcata Community Center in June 2018 to mark the publication of “Marsh Builders.” The Senior Dining filled with community members who came to buy a signed copy and hear from Sharon and two panelists, Dr George Allen and Dr Bob Gearheart, who were involved in the creation of the Arcata Marsh & Wildlife Sanctuary. I was unable to convince humble Sharon to have more than 30 copies of her book available for purchase. They sold out in 30 minutes and necessitated a second signing opportunity at the Interpretive Center in July!

Sharon, a FOAM Life Member, had trained FOAM docents as recently as 2023 about the history of Arcata’s wastewater treatment process and was one of FOAM’s handful of Roving Naturalists who roamed Marsh trails answering visitor questions. Last October, she gave a lecture for FOAM on native bees [viewable at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJ6JDpJT4oQ>] and helped remove invasive sponge plant (frogbit) from ponds at College of the Redwoods in December 2023. She was in the midst of updating her “Marsh Builders” book for reprinting when she passed away.

When I informed FOAM Board members and other Marsh volunteers about Sharon’s passing, remembrances started pouring in. Here are some excerpts:

▶ I looked forward to carpool-

ing with Sharon to our CR California Naturalist class, then hiking in our neighborhood forest to reinforce our new learning. With her trusty black-and-white dog Amos leading the way off trail we hunted salamanders, examined mushrooms, practiced on iNaturalist, and generally nerded out about the natural world. She was brilliant and a true scientist. — Lynn Jones

▶ The community lost a valuable member with Sharon’s passing. I learned so much from Sharon and she will be greatly missed. — Barbara Reisman

▶ My friend Sharon did much to make the Marsh a better place! It’s hard for me to imagine doing without Sharon, she was so consistent and dedicated to our common cause.— Elliott Dabill

▶ Sharon contributed so much to the Marsh, not only with her important book, “The Marsh Builders,” but also doing regular Saturday tours and being on the Roving Naturalist team. Her talk on native bees on Mt Trashmore was fascinating and pushed me to pay way more attention to our native bee species. She is someone we will all remember for a long time. — Paul Johnson

▶ Sharon, and Sharon’s great book, made it possible for me to lead tours at the Marsh. May her memory be a blessing and may we continue to honor her work with ours. — Renshin Bunce

▶ I feel so fortunate to have known Sharon and learned so much from her writing and time in the field. — George Ziminsky

▶ Sharon was so open to sharing her font of knowledge about the Marsh, often being the first to sign up to lead a tour. I regret that I didn’t get to edit the “Marsh Builders” update she was working on. Such a great loss. — Sue Leskiw

▶ I had the privilege of learning from Sharon. She had so much knowledge about the Marsh and ecosystems and was incredibly generous with her time and so positive too. — Gina Rogers

▶ We are so grateful for everything Sharon contributed to the Marsh community over the years. — Heather Schmidt

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► Sharon gave much of her time learning and educating other about the Arcata Marsh. What a gift she gave us! — Suzanne Castiglione

Sharon, who grew up in Chicago, earned a BS in biology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and an MS in environmental toxicology from Oregon State. She moved to Arcata in 1994. She was a freelance science writer since 1993, “covering the quirks and wonders of the natural world and the ways humanity has changed it, for good and ill.” She wrote for magazines like National Wildlife, Audubon, Nature, and New Scientist and for websites on wildlife and environmental topics ranging from malaria-carrying mosquitos to wolves, fish, and sea otters,

In the mid-90s, she proposed a book about the Marsh’s unique wastewater treatment process, but found no takers. “Publishers were unwilling to commit to a book about the ecology of sewage,” she stated in an interview, so she put her marsh book proposal aside, continued freelancing, and in 2011 published a different book for Oxford: “Once and Future Giants: what Ice Age extinctions tell us about the fate of the Earth’s largest animals.” That book received an honorable mention for the Rachel Carson Book Award.

In 2014 she dug out her old notes and revisited her marsh proposal book, “in light of contemporary water pollution controversies,” landing a contract with Oxford. Sharon counseled aspiring authors to “do a book when you’re passionate about the subject and be patient. The book I just finished goes deeper into humanity’s quirky relationship with wetlands than any book I could have written back in the 90s.”

A celebration of life is scheduled from 2 to 6 pm on Saturday, February 15 at the Humboldt Unitarian Universalist Fellowship off Jacoby Creek Road in Bayside. Her family has suggested that memorial donations be made in her name to any of these four local nonprofits: Friends of the Arcata Marsh, Friends of the Dunes, Food for People, and the Humboldt Bay Rowing Association.



*Rakezilla vocalists (from left, Whitney Vickers, Pablo Murcia, and Dulcie Feinstein) performing for the music video at the Arcata Marsh. Photo by Andy Feinstein.*

## Go, Go Rakezilla!

By Andy Feinstein

In December 2023 I joined College of the Redwoods (CR) professor Karen Reiss and her students, Cal Poly Humboldt Natural Resource club members, and other FOAM volunteers at a CR pond to help remove (eradicate) a highly invasive aquatic plant known as frogbit, or South American spongeplant (see Winter 23-24 UPWIND). We did this again in November 2024 at the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary Log Pond. This plant takes over ponds and completely covers the surface, choking out the light and inhibiting the growth of native plants.

To remove frogbit, a very large rake with 9” tines and a long rope is tossed in the water or placed in the water by folks in boats, then is dragged to shore. The extracted and dried invader is either composted or burned to prevent further spread. It is messy, heavy work but made light by the many willing hands tossing and pulling and by the light-hearted spirit of the volunteers.

The rake, sold commercially, is called Rakezilla, which you probably can guess is a play on the word “Godzilla,” the colossal, fictional, reptilian-like monster that terrorized Japan in over 30 films since the 1940s. But you may not be familiar with the 1977 song, “Godzilla,” made popular by Blue Oyster Cult. It is this song that inspired my Rakezilla media project.

Ever since the original eradication, that song has been stuck in my head, except I’m substituting the word “Rakezilla” for “Godzilla.” So in an effort to get the song unstuck, and stuck into yours, I created a music video using my original lyrics and a karaoke version of “Godzilla.” My daughter and two of her bandmates (Hyperion the Band, on Instagram) recorded my lyrics, then acted out the parts at the Arcata Marsh. I incorporated this footage with actual eradication project footage and created a YouTube video, endorsed by the FOAM Board of Directors. You can watch “Go, Go Rakezilla” from the FOAM website by going to YouTube and searching “Rakezilla,” or by this link (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfFPR-egzhA>)

But be forewarned... once you watch it, the only way to get the catchy tune unstuck from your head is by sharing the video with others!

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### *Wiyot Acknowledgment*

**The Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary is located on the unceded land of the Wiyot People, who continue to remain in relationship to these lands through ceremony, culture, and stewardship. They are important parts of the history of and continuing knowledge of this place.**



*Accordion book by Maureen McGarry.*

## Sunday Nature Journaling

*By Lynn Jones*

After several inspiring journal tours, attendance at the once-a-month sessions has dropped off. Too cold? Too early? Weekday? So we're rebranding the program to test whether there's enthusiasm for group journaling once a month. Starting Sunday, January 26 at 10 am we will meet at the Interpretive Center, then on the last Sunday of each month.

Formal and informal nature writing, logging nature data, painting and drawing scenes or species are all nature-documenting traditions. Many science organizations, magazines, and schools compile methodic, controlled nature journals for research purposes. Lay people and artists have interpreted nature creatively, as well. Any number of authors have eloquently shared their observations. And from Beatrice Potter to Andy Goldsworthy, art emerges from careful observation. My goal for mobilizing a journal group is to provide a chunk of time to simply sit in nature and reflect, with all your senses open. Whether you write, paint, draw, or simply observe, sitting quietly and patiently observing is instructive and meditative.

Local artist, author, and teacher Maureen McGarry (<https://maureenmcgarry.com/>) will provide materials and guide a group in making accordion books that can be used as journals, free of charge, on Saturday, February 22 from 10 am to noon at AMIC. Leave your name and e-mail at AMIC if you're interested.

Join me the last Sunday of each month, with a folding chair, your journal, and writing tools. Bundle up and we'll find a spot to sit, write, draw, and share for about an hour. We'll collect meta-data together, list

some plants and animals, check in with all our senses, then reflect on what we're curious about, how we feel, what we're reminded of: simple reflections on our place in nature.



*Participants in November 2024 tour.*

## Second Sunday Cycling Rolls into the New Year

*By Andy Feinstein*

This regularly attended, comprehensive tour of the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary (AMWS) allows participants to casually reach the farthest points of the Marsh and to see areas not typically accessed on FOAM tours. Starting from the Interpretive Center every second Sunday of the month at 2 pm, this docent-led, easy bike ride visits the Log Pond, the outskirts of the wastewater treatment facility, and the perimeter of the Oxidation Ponds, then continues around Klopp Lake and back along the enhancement marshes and the red-legged frog habitat.

Cyclists of all ages ride by most components of the wastewater treatment facility and learn how Arcata's wastewater is processed and integrated into the AMWS wetlands. Wildlife surprises occur regularly. For example, on December's ride, two northern harriers and a red-tailed hawk battled it out over Oxidation Pond #2 and three river otters frolicked in Klopp Lake. And along the trails, winter-blooming coyote brush provided nutrition for critters.

Thanks to FOAM, participants are offered a free logo bike bell, so "ring" in the new year with a fun and Second Sunday Cycling ride! And I'm training fellow Board member Lynn Jones to fill in for me any time I can't be your leader.

## Are Water Molecules Permanent?

*By Paul Wilson*

You might have heard on the radio or read at the Interpretive Center that all the water ( $H_2O$ ) we have today also was water during the time of the dinosaurs and has been recycled over and over. I think this is not quite true. It is true that the oxygen and hydrogen in our water are the same oxygen and hydrogen atoms in  $H_2O$  back in the day.

But I think this ignores the carbon cycle. What photosynthesis does is release oxygen to the environment without hydrogen. The hydrogen gets incorporated into carbohydrates. Eventually, the atmospheric oxygen ( $O_2$ ) is used by respiring organisms, which are burning carbohydrates, and in the process, water is remade. The atoms are recycled but not the molecules.

The nitrogen cycle also involves hydrogen and oxygen. Atmospheric  $N_2$  is captured by nitrogen-fixing bacteria (such as in the roots of legumes) and changed to ammonia ( $NH_3$ ). The hydrogen atoms come from  $H^+$  ions in the bacterial cells that arose from the breaking up of water. The ammonia might be converted to nitrite ( $NO_2^-$ ), and if so, the oxygen comes from  $O_2$ . The nitrite might be oxidized to nitrate ( $NO_3^-$ ), and if so, the additional oxygen atom comes from  $H_2O$ . Much, if not all, the nitrogen in proteins and nucleic acids is bonded to oxygen and hydrogen atoms derived from breaking up water molecules rather recently.

I think that the notion that water is recycled comes from a simplified understanding of the water cycle. We drink water and pee it out. Then it goes downstream and evaporates into the atmosphere. The clouds blow inland and rain falls upon the land. The water flows into the Mad River, and from there it soon ends up back in our faucets. Plenty of  $H_2O$  molecules that we drink might have passed through the kidneys of people 100 years ago, some through the kidneys of mammoths 20,000 years ago, a bit through the kidneys of di-

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nosaurus 100 million years ago. But most water of the distant past has been broken into its component atoms and remade into water repeatedly.

## King Tide Tour

By Elliott Dabill

FOAM's King Tide tours have always had a good turnout, but on November 16, the fates worked against us. On the Saturday morning of the tour anybody planning to see high water would have to see high socks instead, as in hundreds of people attending a cross country track meet, knee high socks and all, from several local high schools. Parking lots full, turnouts along I Street jammed, there was nowhere to park, so the tour was limited to the less-than-30 souls determined to see the highest tide of the year.

We made several stops along I Street to discuss the cause of King Tides: namely, that the Earth is closest to both the moon and the sun at this time of year. There are six to eight spring tides throughout the year when the moon is at perigee but you have to wait all year to hit perihelion.

Many folks were interested in the relationship with sea level rise and climate change, so the discussion focused on today's King Tides foretelling regular tides in future decades. By the end of this century the Arcata Marsh could very well be underwater, except for the protected zone along G Street proposed by the City. There is some irony in the highest point at the Marsh being the top of Mount Trashmore, a former landfill.

The group also was interested in the \$60 million construction project underway through the next year or so. Machinery refurbished, oxidation ponds with new agitators, and



(Right) The King Tide high water and (left) the same view a few days earlier at low tide. Photos by Elliott Dabill.

rerouting of pipes all work together now to deliver treated wastewater to Brackish Marsh and into the salt marsh at the north end of the system. We ended the tour at the break in the dike near huge power towers next to Gearheart Marsh.

## Results of Holiday Tours

► Paul Johnson, Ren Bunce, and Jenny Hanson divided up the crowd of over 25 people who showed up for FOAM's annual Thanksgiving Day Ramble. The weather was great and the groups took their time walking and looking at critters.

► Christmas Day brought nearly 20 people out to join leader Paul Wilson's tour. Again, bad weather was not a factor.

► However, the New Year's Day folks weren't as lucky, weather-wise, as it was rainy and cold. Co-leader Ren Bunce says "We got eight people, which is eight more than we expected!" Co-leader Paul Johnson handled the first half of the tour, pointing out small things along the trail to attendees as they walked from AMIC to the wastewater treatment plan. Ren took the reins for the second half, walking a big loop around Klopp Lake and Mount Trashmore. "It worked quite well, according to our guests, even though we were all cold and wet after two hours," concluded Ren.

## Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival

April 17-20, 2025

Arcata Community Center

Over 70 sessions!

Register at [www.godwitdays.org](http://www.godwitdays.org)

## Godwit Days Festival Free Events for Kids & More

Godwit Days always includes free events, some of which are specifically aimed at children age 5 and above. The following two workshops/field trips require pre-registration at [www.godwitdays.org](http://www.godwitdays.org) and a responsible adult must accompany kids:

► On Saturday, April 19, join Mark Wilson for a Kids' Birding and Nature Walk at the Arcata Marsh. The session (#SA46) starts at the Interpretive Center at 9:30 am and lasts 2 hours. Learn how to use binoculars to find and identify birds. Binoculars specifically made for children will be available for use. Young participants will receive their choice of a free FOAM logo enamel pin or embroidered patch, courtesy of the sponsor, FOAM. Limited to 15 children.

► On Friday, April 18, have fun breaking apart owl pellets, to see what the birds have been eating, during a 1-hour workshop led by College of the Redwoods biology professor Karen Reiss. The pellets — donated by Mendocino optics dealer and Bird Fair vendor Out of This World — have been disinfected and created especially for exploration. The workshop (#FR26) starts at 4 pm and is limited to 15 children.

And don't forget the Third Annual Family Nature Crafts "Mega-Palooza" on Saturday, April 19 from 11 am to 1 pm that requires no pre-registration. To date, FOAM, the Cal Poly Natural History Museum, California State Parks, and the Sequoia Park Zoo have committed to offering tables of nature crafts during in this drop-in session.

Also among the 17 free events making up the festival are trips to Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Arcata Ridge Trail, Sue-Meg State Park, Seawood Cape Preserve, Humboldt Coastal Nature Center, and Lanphere Dunes, as well as a native plant walk, dragonfly workshop, "Big Sit," and optics lecture

All events described above require pre-registration at [www.godwitdays.org](http://www.godwitdays.org). Visit the website for a complete listing of the 70+ sessions that make up the 2025 festival.



The Cal Poly Humboldt Spongeplant Removal Crew. Photo by Paul Johnson.

## Spongeplant 2.0

By Lynn Jones

FOAM sponsored a second spongeplant eradication day on the south end of Log Pond on November 2, before amphibian egg-laying began. Isolated from the rest of the Log Pond by dense stands of cattails, we believe that the invasion of this problematic plant is limited to this body of water (please alert FOAM if you spot it elsewhere in the Marsh!). Meantime, we're prepared to systematically pull it out regularly, in hopes that it eventually is conquered.

Native to tropical Central and South America, spongeplant (*Limnobium laevigatum*, family Hydrocharitaceae), also known as frogbit, is a fast-growing, invasive, perennial, floating aquatic plant. Dispersed by water, wind, and birds, spongeplant reproduces both sexually (by seed) and asexually (vegetatively).

*Limnobium laevigatum* was introduced as an ornamental pond plant but has now spread to many California waterways. It negatively impacts the environment by growing dense mats that disrupt light and oxygen levels in the water, which in our Log Pond alters the habitat for frogs, salamanders, newts, and some insects. The mats crowd out native plants and obstruct water flow.

Removal is heavy and difficult. Manual removal usually leaves behind whole plants and viable piec-

es of the plant that can re-establish populations. Removal by poisons is not an option. Composting far from a water source or incineration are solutions for dealing with the plunder.

With the assistance of 20 Cal Poly Humboldt students from the Natural Resources Club and a hearty FOAM crew, we spent three sunny hours pulling spongeplant. A rotation of paddlers took two kayaks out to farther and farther reaches of the pond, where they pierced spongeplant mats with Rakezillas. (A big thank you to FOAM Life Member Margie Nulsen for buying FOAM its own Rakezilla, rather than having to borrow from College of the Redwoods!) Teams on the dock pulled the raked masses onto the dock, where a stomping team wrung out as much water as possible. The wheelbarrow team loaded the debris, then ran it up the hill to a giant pile, where it lies today, decomposing. It was an efficient assembly line, even though the number of people on the dock threatened to swamp it!

This is not a science experiment FOAM opted for, but we will document the seasonal changes and the encroachment of new spongeplant growth. We will track native plant responses and witness how long the spoils take to decompose. We are in alliance with College of the Redwoods' efforts to eradicate spongeplant in its ponds. Wish us luck!

Be sure to watch Board member Andy Feinstein's music video documenting FOAM's effort against this exotic intruder at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfFPR-egzhA>



Scenes from the November 2 work day. All photos by Paul Johnson.

## Visitor Log

Over the last 3 months, visitors from the following states besides California have signed the logbook at the AMIC front counter: Alaska, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Washington.





Sue Leskiw wearing her 2005 T-shirt.  
Photo by Tom Leskiw.

### MARCH/APRIL Godwit Days: A Pictorial History

Curated by Sue Leskiw &  
Alex Stillman

The first Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival — a 1-day event held in Hotel Arcata and City Hall — occurred in 1996. It sprang from discussions by a tourism development task force charged by the City Manager with examining ways to encourage people to discover Arcata and Humboldt County. Much has changed since then! If COVID-19 hadn't intervened, this would be the 30th year for the festival.

When the originally scheduled March/April artist withdrew, Suzanne Castiglione sounded me out about a replacement. Given the auspicious timing (6 weeks before the start of the 2025 event), I suggested that I work with the Godwit Days nonprofit organization to pull together a show about how the festival has changed over three decades. Godwit Days chair Alex Stillman agreed to serve as co-organizer.

The show will be presented as a timeline, organized around each year's T-shirt. I had taken photos of people wearing the shirts back to the beginning for two historical articles I wrote in 2011 and 2020. So, large prints of the T-shirt photos for each year will be displayed chronologically. Below each will be bullet statements of festival highlights, plus smaller photos, graphics, or other memorabilia (eg, rack cards, flyers).

If you have photos showing participants on field trips, at the opening reception, enjoying nature crafts, etc. — particularly prior to 2004 — that you could lend us for the show, please contact me at [sueleskiw1@gmail.com](mailto:sueleskiw1@gmail.com) as soon as possible.

It will be a trip down memory lane for old timers and some brand-new information for more recent participants as we focus on people enjoying all the pieces that make up this community favorite.

[At press time, Sue was working out the details of FOAM and Godwit Days co-sponsoring a free public reception, ideally on a Sunday afternoon early in March. Watch for updates in local media, Facebook, etc.]

### Calendar of Events

*[Docent-led tours leave the Interpretive Center every Saturday at 2 pm]*

February—Photographs by Aldaron Laird

February 5—Lecture on beneficial uses of the Arcata Marsh by Andrew Wolff, 7 pm (see p. 1)

February 9—Bicycle tour of the Marsh with Andy Feinstein, 2 pm (see p. 6)

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

February 22—Nature journaling class with Maureen McGarry, 10

am, must pre-register (see p. 6)

February 23—Nature journaling session with Lynn Jones, 10 am (see p. 6)

February 26—Lecture on sea level rise at the Arcata Marsh by Aldaron Laird, 7 pm (see p. 1)

March/April—Pictorial history of the Godwit Days festival, curated by Sue Leskiw & Alex Stillman; (free public reception being planned for 3/2 or 3/9)

March 5—Lecture on fish at the Arcata Marsh by Lily Olmo, 7 pm (see p. 1)

March 9—Bicycle tour of the Marsh with Andy Feinstein, 2 pm

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

March 22—Deadline for Student Bird Art Contest entries (see p. 2)

March 23—Nature journaling session with Lynn Jones, 10 am

April 2—Lecture on otters by Jeff Black, 7 pm (see p. 1)

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

April 19—Nature craft activities with FOAM and other organizations, Godwit Days festival, 11 am-1 pm, Arcata Community Center (see p. 2); visit [www.godwitdays.org](http://www.godwitdays.org) for a complete festival schedule

May/June—Display of winning Student Bird Art at AMIC

May 8—FOAM Board Meeting, 6:30-8 pm

### Thanks to Our Supporters, Late October through late January

► **Best Friends (\$100+):** Elizabeth Etgen (Sacramento); Leah & Morgan King\*; Linda & Doug Mortenson\*; Carolyn Mueller\*; Ed Murray; Daniel & Marilyn Ricketts (Modesto, NEW Life Members!); John Sloan (Fresno)\*; Jeannie & Steven Smalley; George Waller; David Weiss (Iowa City, IA)

► **Supporters (\$50-99):** Gail Coonen; Lorraine Dillon & Mike Metro; Kathleen Lee; Mark Nakano\*

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► **Donations from Life Members:** Lee & Chris House (\$1000 from; Vintage BMW House); Wendy & Michael Finen (Cameron Park, \$400 from Carol Irving Foundation); Susan Hansen (\$400); Linda Rogers (Pullman, WA, \$400); Jean Santi (\$200); Barbara Barratt (\$100); Aldaron & Christy Laird (\$100); Margie Nulsen, "Rakezilla" tool for spongeplant removal (see p. 8)

► **Other Donations:** Miranda Hartridge (Yuba City, \$100 in honor of Ira Blatt & Debbe Hartridge); Nancy Graupner (Brewster, MA, \$50 in honor of Arcata resident and Marsh walker Jeanne Pendergast); AMIC donation box, \$137.35

\* = New member

FOAM  
Friends of the Arcata Marsh  
PO Box 410  
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**Mark Your Calendar for:**

**Beneficial Uses of Marsh Lecture, 2/5**  
**Sea Level Rise at Marsh Lecture, 2/26**  
**Marsh Fish Lecture, 3/5**  
**Student Bird Art Contest Deadline, 3/22**  
**Otter Lecture, 4/2**  
**Godwit Days Bird Festival, 4/17-20**  
**FOAM Family Nature Crafts, 4/19**

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**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**



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Please check the appropriate membership category:

Individual \$25       Family \$35       Student/Senior \$18

Sponsor \$50       Best Friend \$100       Life Member \$750

I would like more information about volunteering for FOAM,

FRIENDS OF THE ARCATA MARSH, PO Box 410, Arcata CA 95518      [arcatamarshfriends.org](http://arcatamarshfriends.org)

A tax-exempt, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, EIN #68-0232871. All donations are tax deductible.

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*If you are receiving a complimentary copy of this newsletter, please consider joining FOAM.  
If you were a member, but have allowed your membership to lapse, please renew.  
The Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center street address (not for mail) is 569 South G Street, Arcata.  
FOAM's mailing address is PO Box 410, Arcata CA 95518. You can reach us by phone  
from 10 am to 4 pm Tuesday through Sunday and Monday from 1 to 4 pm at 707-826-2359.*