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PETALUMA WETLANDS ALLIANCE

(A COMMITTEE OF MADRONE AUDUBON)
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Providing Education in and Stewardship of Petaluma's Public Wetlands

Winter 2011

Dutra Wins ?

by Gerald Moore

On December 14, 2010, the Board of Supervisors, without allowing more public comment, approved the Dutra asphalt project by a vote of 3/2 (men/women). The citizens of Petaluma (and elsewhere) are enraged and are evaluating their legal strategies. If you are against the Dutra project and want to help the friends of Shollenberger continue the legal fight, please consider donating to our ongoing legal expenses. You can send a tax-deductible contribution to the O.W.L. Foundation, 1390 North McDowell Blvd., Suite G-306, Petaluma, CA 94954. In the memo line of your check write "Save Shollenberger." The O.W.L. Foundation is the fiscal arm of the Petaluma River Council, which has mobilized the legal efforts against this asphalt plant project. One hundred percent of these contributions will go toward our legal expenses.

On Friday, January 14, 2011, a lawsuit against the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors over their Dutra asphalt plant decision was filed by the City of Petaluma and several plaintiffs, including the Petaluma River Council, Madrone Audubon, Moms for Clean Air, Friends of Shollenberger Park, and others. Please wish us well and keep your support coming.

Petaluma Wetlands Alliance (PWA) Gets Major Impact Grant from the Petaluma Educational Foundation, 2010–2011

by Gerald Moore

For the third consecutive year, the PWA Education Committee has received a Major Impact Grant from the Petaluma Educational Foundation to help support their third grade wetlands educational program. The goal of this partnership is to grow the docent program so we can reach every third grade class in Petaluma.

The Second Annual Petaluma Christmas Bird Count for Kids

by Al Hesla

Petaluma's Christmas Bird Count for Kids in 2010 was a great success with 14 kids and their parents participating. Following some Binocular Boot Camp lessons by their birding team leaders at the Kenilworth Recreation Center, the 4 teams of kids, accompanied by their parents, set out to their assigned trails in the Petaluma wetlands for 90 minutes of birding. They identified 55 species for a total count of 1,618 birds. The teams then returned to the center for a cup of hot chocolate to warm up.

The group enjoyed a brown-bag lunch and Gerald Moore told the history of the Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Each team reported their favorite bird observations with one group especially excited to see a gopher! The kids then enjoyed a rousing game of Bird Bingo—including prizes—where they matched bird names on their bingo cards with Bob Dyer's bird photographs projected on a screen. We were then treated to a special presentation from the Bird Rescue Center of Santa Rosa with three of their live, wild birds: a Turkey Vulture, a Merlin, and a Red-tailed Hawk. The kids learned about the care of injured wild birds and how the birds can inadvertently look upon the humans who care for them as their parents, a process known as imprinting. All-in-all, a great day was had by all!

Special thanks to all who helped out in the event: Marilyn Blume, Peter Colasanti, Bob Dyer, Janeann Erickson, Kathleen Garvey, Helen Heal, Larry Johnson, Andy LaCasse, Gerald Moore, Mary Edith Moore, Len Nelson, Nora Lee Pearl, John Richards, Sally Rowland, John Shribbs, Bob Speckels, and Wayne Till. A very special thank you goes to co-sponsor Jan Mandrell, Recreation Supervisor in the Petaluma Parks and Recreation Department.

Docent Service Numbers for Shollenberger Park and Ellis Creek

by Bob Dyer

Since 2003 I have been recording the number of children and adults to whom docents provide educational services at Shollenberger (and Ellis Creek starting in 2009). For 2010, the number was 909 for children and 543 for adults, totaling 1,452, the highest total to date.

The most significant number is the total for children—from 2003–2010 it was 5,745! Typical services for children included our program for third graders as well as the annual outing of Petaluma Junior High's seventh grade class, coordinated by teacher Larry West. In 2010 we also helped with the Waugh School's "Kid Camp" in June and conducted a Christmas bird count for kids at the end of the year.

For adults, we held Saturday bird walks and did several walks for organizations, including LandPaths and in connection with World Diabetes Day. We also counted teachers and parents who came to Shollenberger with our school programs.

2010 Contributors

by Mary Edith Moore

The Petaluma Wetlands Alliance, committee of Madrone Audubon, thanks all of you who helped us in 2010. Your contributions made it possible for us to strengthen our innovative educational and habitat restoration programs.

Financial Contributions

Organizations that donated to our educational program were Econscious and the Petaluma Educational Foundation; and those that donated to habitat restoration included AstraZeneca, Autodesk Inc., Electra Foundation, McElvoy of Marin LLC, Petaluma Garden Club, and Unitarian Universalists of Petaluma.

Individuals who donated \$50 and above: Naomi Adams, Matti Christensen, Kathleen Garvey, Al and Amy Hesla, Gerald and Mary Edith Moore, Ryan Phelan, John and JoAnn Richards, and Kathleen Tornow.

Habitat Restoration

The following **groups** came to Shollenberger and Alman Marsh to either remove invasive nonnative vegetation or plant native trees, shrubs, grasses, and flowers: Agilent Technologies Inc., Athleta, Calvary Chapel Youth, Econscious, Medtronic Vascular Inc., PRBO Conservation Science, Saint Mark's Lutheran Church in San Francisco, "Give a Day, Get a Disney Day," Tri-Valley 4-H, Sonoma County Summer Ecology Corps, and students from Sonoma State, Casa Grande, and Montessori schools.

Individuals who worked two or more hours in restoration or the nursery included ML Carle, Matti Christensen, Gary Compari, Dameon, Arlene Esaki, Valerie Franklin, Kathleen Garvey, Al Hesla, Larry Johnson, Andy LaCasse, Ingrid Larsen, Al Lucine, Deborah May-Buffum, Jane Merryman, Gerald and Mary Edith Moore, Len Nelson, Connie Peabody, Boyce and Kay Quinn, John Richards, John Shribbs, Ron Smith, Kathleen Tornow, Liz Uhlig, and Elaine Woodriff.

Also, we thank the Petaluma Parks and Recreation Department and Bank of the West.

Petaluma Wetlands Alliance Posts to eBird

by Peter Colasanti

One of the first major undertakings of Petaluma Wetlands Alliance was to spearhead bird surveys at Shollenberger Park back in 2004. They were conducted weekly for the first year, and then continued on a monthly basis. These surveys led in turn to surveys at Tolay Regional Park, Ellis Creek, and Tolay Creek Ranch. While we were busy accumulating data, along came eBird.

eBird has quickly evolved into a Web-based global database compiling bird sightings. They'll take incidental sightings, but their *raison d'etre* is full checklist surveys like the ones we've been doing. It was a natural assumption that our data would be submitted, and thanks to its neat compilation on spreadsheet by Len Nelson, it's been fairly simple to upload in eBird Checklist Format without a lot of redundant data entry (AviSys users can also streamline submission using eBird Record Format).

Anyone can register as an eBird user—it's free. Just Google it and click your way in, give the name you'd like your sightings to appear as, a password (write it down somewhere!), and your email address. Just want to lurk and not post anything? It's highly recommended. The basics of birding include binoculars, a field guide, and an applicable checklist for your area of interest. In analog days, the last was usually the hard one to find. With eBird, you can generate checklists for any place anybody's posted from, with Arrivals and Departures, all-time species High Counts, and new possibilities being added often. If you have a competitive or social interest in birding, you can pull up lists of top birders by site, county, state—you name it.

It may be a bit difficult for some who've come to see birding as a competitive sport to wrap their perception around the nature, even the presence, of institutional data such as ours on eBird. Well, cooperation trumps competition for results: in 2006, 2007, and 2008, PWA Data was the Top eBirder in Sonoma County. This year we intend to broaden our scope as we run surveys in other parts of the county in conjunction with the upcoming Breeding Bird Atlas project. So shift that paradigm and contact me if you'd like to join us (peter_colasanti@yahoo.com). We have blocks in PetWet, Salt Point, and Knight's Valley; maybe you've got one we could sweep together.