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# PETALUMA WETLANDS ALLIANCE

(A COMMITTEE OF MADRONE AUDUBON)  
P.O. Box 973, Petaluma CA 94953-0973

## Summer 2011

### **Dutra Asphalt Plant**

**by Gerald Moore**

The final fate of the Dutra asphalt plant, scheduled to be built across the river from Shollenberger Park, is still winding its way through the court. There are many good reasons not to build this plant at this location, and the legal debates over each of these take time (and money). We are confident of a win, but that is still many months away.

PWA encourages all Petalumans who love Shollenberger Park, but hate the idea of adding to our park a toxic chemical generator plus the fumes from hundreds of diesel trucks per day, to stand up for the park and help us in the legal battle. You may send checks to the O.W.L. Foundation, which is the fiscal arm of the Petaluma River Council that handles the finances of our lawsuit. All contributions to O.W.L. are tax-deductible and should be mailed to

O.W.L. Foundation  
1390 North McDowell Blvd., Suite G-306  
Petaluma, CA 94954

Write "Save Shollenberger" on the comment line of your check. **All** of the donated money goes to the lawsuit.

### **Birds of Shollenberger Park and the Petaluma Wetlands**

**by Bob Dyer**

A new edition of this popular bird list has been printed and is now available at the entrance to Shollenberger Park. You can also get it online by going to the PWA web site and looking under "Animals and Plants." The new edition lists 211 species observed in the Petaluma Wetlands.

The bird list was first published in January, 2005. Since then thousands of copies have been distributed to park-goers and by the Petaluma Visitor's Center. The first edition had 166 species, and we have been

adding species at the rate of about eight a year. Often, the source for new discoveries is during one of our periodic bird surveys at Shollenberger and Ellis Creek. New birds are also added after I receive reports from credible birders.

The new list added the following species: Red-throated Loon, American Golden Plover, Solitary Sandpiper, Black Skimmer, Brown Creeper, White-breasted Nuthatch, Lark Sparrow, and Orchard Oriole.

Docent **Wayne Till** does the computer work-up of this handy list.

### **Grasses, Grasses Everywhere**

**by Gerald Moore**

This has been a great year for grasses at Shollenberger, thanks to the abundant rains last winter and spring. It dawned on us who do habitat restoration at Shollenberger that grasses are actually the predominant plant type in the park. However, our knowledge of them was limited to dividing our fifteen to twenty species of grasses into "the four (?) good guys," "a couple of bad guys," and "all the rest." Thus we set out to learn more about all the grasses, starting with their names and eventually their ecological behaviors. On June 11 Mary Edith and I attended a grass identification workshop given by **Wade Belew**, chairman of the California Native Grasslands Association. This one-day course at Pepperwood was excellent, but just a beginning, since one cannot go to a bookstore and purchase a book on identifying and understanding California's grasses, of which there are more than 200 species.

One note of progress on our grasses: the quantity of Meadow Barley, Creeping Wild Rye, and Salt Grass (all good guys) has noticeably increased this year. These species help us do restoration by forming dense mats on the soil surface via their rhizomes, which choke out many of the weeds. Many of the "all the rest" species are also abundant this year and a joy to find because they add to the biodiversity of Shollenberger. First appearances suggest that some of these grass species may also be competing with the thistles, mustard, and pepperweed. If you think the human world is a "dog-eat-dog" place, the world of plants is just as competitive for the resources they need.

### **Do you have some free time this summer?**

**by Jane Merryman**

Why not volunteer at the Native Plant Nursery at Casa Grande High School? We work Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. until noon at the facility located on Juliet Drive (off Ely Blvd.) next to the Casa Grande playing fields. We collect seed and plant it, pot up plants and divide them, do weeding, and make sure everything is well watered. It's amazing how relaxing it is to get dirt under your fingernails. We even have our own therapy dog, Mugsy, who keeps us smiling. For more information, call John Shribbs, 769-8961, or Jane Merryman, 762-1023.

### **Madrone Audubon Gives Special Recognition to Bridget McCoy**

**by Mary Edith Moore**

**Bridget McCoy** is the comptroller at Econscious, a Petaluma company bordering Shollenberger Park and serving a growing demand for organic and sustainable apparel and accessories that are durable, comfortable, and great looking. Bridget is very involved in the environment and is an avid supporter of the Petaluma Wetlands Alliance (PWA). The story goes that one year she looked out her office window, saw the PWA docents working with the schoolchildren, contacted PWA, and said she wanted to help support the educational program. Since that first year, Bridget has contributed annually to PWA's educational program and, just last year, came with her employees and worked alongside PWA in habitat restoration. Now, that is a friend indeed!

**Kiosk #7, Habitat Restoration,  
Is Modified and Updated**

**by Mary Edith Moore**

Late May found **Peter Colasanti, Gerald Moore, and Mary Edith Moore** standing before the kiosk in preparation of removing the Plexiglas for cleaning, modification, and updating. To minimize interior condensation, Peter added more air holes to balance the interior/exterior temperature and covered the holes with screen to keep the small creatures out. Gerald arranged the new laminated photos and text in the kiosk, while Mary Edith chased spider webs and polished the Plexiglas. The result is well worth a new look.

**Another Successful Season  
for the PWA School Program**

**by Helen Heal**

Between early March and late May, 33 docents in our educational program provided in-class and in-field science education to 324 third graders. The children came from 14 classrooms in schools within the Petaluma River Watershed. Through PWA's program, they had an opportunity to learn about wetlands, watersheds, and the habitats and inhabitants of Shollenberger Park. When added to the 268 children from 12 classrooms that we served in the fall season, our dedicated and hard-working education docents provided these experiences to 592 local third graders over the 2010-2011 school year.

None of this would have been possible without the hard work of **Kris Brook** and **Karen Johnson**. Thanks to Kris for maintaining our materials and organizing our docent schedule. These are both jobs that require constant attention during our fall and spring season and year-round! And a big, big thanks also to Karen, who has been responsible for scheduling with the teachers and maintaining contact with schools and teachers during the school year—which is year-round also! Karen is moving on to free up her time for other volunteer work, and we are looking forward to working with Boyce Quinn as our teacher contact. We will certainly miss Karen's joy, optimism, and hospitality!

Also, we were fortunate to add a group of newly trained docents to the program this spring. Our winter training program brought new docents who have jumped right in with their ideas, skills, experiences, and commitment. We also want to extend gratitude to the many seasoned docents who contribute morning after morning, and who respond whenever the call goes out for some extra scheduling. Every single docent's time in the program helps to bring the joys of the wetlands to the children, teachers, and parents we serve.