



PETALUMA WETLANDS ALLIANCE

P.O. Box 2182, Petaluma CA 94953-2182
Petalumawetlands.org

PWA NEWSLETTER August 2022



President's Notes

John Shribbs, President

We had our Annual Members Meeting and Picnic on July 10 at McNear Park with over 30 people joining, discussing, and enjoying eats. This is a midterm year, so no elections were held, however the Vice President position is still open. The three officers will continue for another year and elections will be held next year. We will need a new President next year since the By-Laws limit my term to 4 years, 2 consecutive terms of 2 years. So, think about stepping up next June and filling in the new Board.

This year we have over 140 members and more join each month. Besides hardworking Board Directors, several members volunteer to do extra work filling boxes with pamphlets and dog bags, maintaining trails, removing invasive plants, bird surveys and research, bench upkeep, Field Guide sales, library maintenance, bird and nature tours, and salt monitoring of the Central Pond. Unfortunately, the education program was closed down again due to COVID issues. Shollenberger Park and Alman Marsh maintenance continues weekly.

I was honored by the City with nomination for Service Award to State Parks and Recreation District 1 and we celebrated with other volunteers from the north coast counties in District 1. Besides PWA I am also involved with the City serving as Chair of Tree Committee, helping ReLeaf Petaluma nonprofit get established with grants and projects, vocal member of General Plan advisory Committee and hopefully wrapping up my work on the Groundwater Sustainability Advisory Committee.

At the meeting I reported on complimentary and synergistic events occurring in Petaluma. This is exciting times for the green movement occurring throughout the city. ReLeaf has planted 150 trees in Wiseman and has another 2 grants to plant over 400 trees this winter, City has grant to create an Urban Forestry Management Plan, Health District won grant from Blue Zones to develop culture for health and longevity, City got a grant from American Institute of Architects to rethink 15-minute neighborhoods and safe roads. Cool Petaluma has over 300 Block Captains (I am one) developing neighborhood teams to take personal climate action and emergency preparedness. The General Plan Advisory Committee, which I am part of, is creating a very green progressive and aggressive plan for both short- and long-term climate action. We recently had a Ciclovía event to promote Lynch Creek Trail and bicycle travel with several hundred people participating. We are part of a larger environmental movement in Petaluma.

Because I want to see the new General Plan get implemented, I decided to run for City Council in District 2, which is the Northeast section of Petaluma, north of Washington and east of Maria. I will continue my work with PWA and drop some of my other activities if elected. PWA and working at Shollenberger Park is a long-time commitment for me as I hope it is for you too.

PWA Membership Report

Kathy Cherrstrom, Chair

PWA Membership as of 1 July, 2022: 142. New members: 3, Cynthia Walsh (Family) and Michael Thoma (Individual). Membership as of 31 July, 2022: 145.

Information Chair

Total donations received as of 31 July 2022: \$1,530.00

2nd Quarter 2022 Hours

School Program	5.00
Research	366.25
Publicity/Marketing	161.25
Habitat/Restoration	193.75
Board	118.50

PWA Annual Picnic

Mary Kadri, Lead for the picnic activities, did an outstanding job. We had about 40 members and family/guests in attendance

Docent development

Anne Taylor, Chair

Nine New Docents Complete Training

The first docent training in two years started January 13, 2022 and continued for seven sessions. It was planned for in-person training, but the Rise of Omicron changed that. Half the sessions were on Zoom and the others were outdoors at Shollenberger Park. The trainees learned all the things that PWA does, wetlands science, and what we do in the school program. They went on a Nature Walk at Shollenberger and experienced what the third graders learn in the school program. The last session was in-person at the Community Center. The new docent got acquainted with the current docents and received certificates from Drew Halter of the Parks Department. They also received docent badges and hats and later enjoyed refreshments and conversation.

Welcome to Bev Alexander, Paul Alexander, Anita Buckner, Ray Erny, Dale Evje, Mary Kadri, Becky Lynch, Jean Reed, and Linda Sheppard.



New docents: Dale Evje, Bev Alexander, Ray Erny, Anita Buckner, Paul Alexander, Mary Kadri, Linda Sheppard; not shown: Becky Lynch, Jean Reed.

Docent Education

THE PLANTS AND ANIMALS OF BAY AREA OAK WOODLANDS: An Intimate Overview, March 17, a presentation by Kate Marionchild on Zoom

Last year we recommended a presentation by Kate Marianchild, “Who’s Who among the Oaks”, which turned out to be really interesting. This talk focused on oak woodland plants and included tantalizing tidbits about a few of the animal species that depend on each plant. It also included a treatment of some riparian oak woodland species.

A PLANT IDENTIFICATION WALK AT SHOLLENBERGER PARK



April 21, outdoor experience with Krissa Arnold-Klein, naturalist. Many thanks to Noellene Sommer for arranging this activity!

We started by learning about the app, **iNaturalist**. The app helps you identify both plants and animals that you encounter. Then we walked the North trail with Krissa, stopping frequently to discuss the plants. She was knowledgeable about insects and the galls they make on the plants. Therefore, we learned about the insects and galls on species such as the coyote bush. We also studied a number of grasses and “weeds”.

Krissa Klein Arnold has a BA from SSU in Environmental Studies, and has worked as a forester with PG&E.. Among other accomplishments, she personally observed and photographed 3,623 (and counting!) individual species for *iNaturalist*, most of which are from Sonoma, Marin, or Mendocino counties.

School Education Program

Carol Homrighouse, Chair

I, along with the PWA School Committee, would like to update you on our Fall ‘22 School Program. First, thanks to all who responded to either one of the surveys that was e-mailed to you! It was most appreciated.

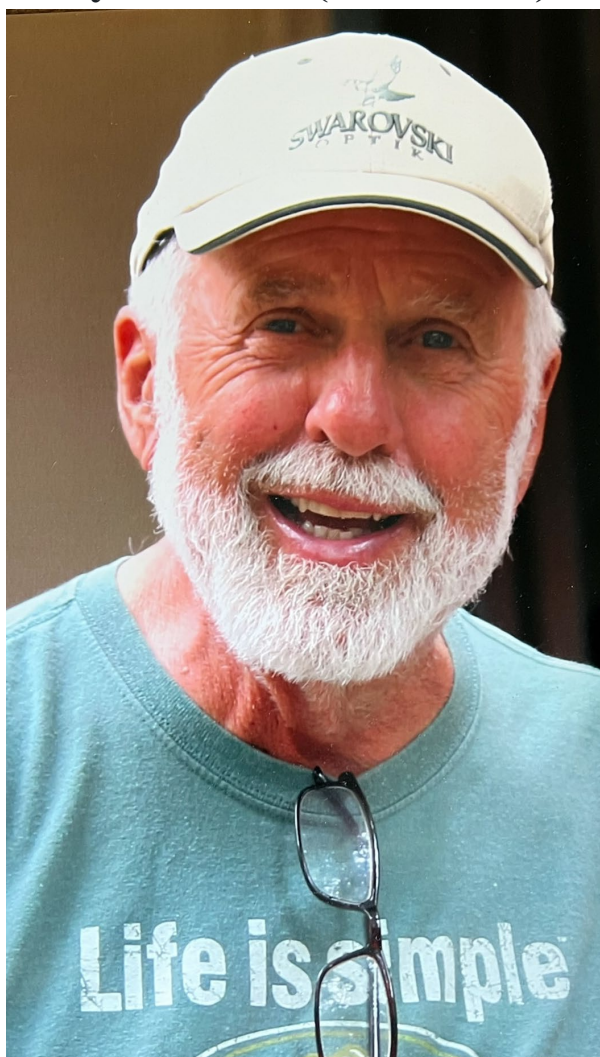
Due to a very small response to the survey, we will not have enough docents to offer our full school program this Fall. The committee, Boyce, Kris and myself, are exploring options. So far, it seems that we may not have enough docent volunteers to offer a modified, Shollenberger-only program. At present, Shollenberger Park has little water and almost no birds. We hope to make a final decision regarding the fall program next week and will inform you all of our fall plans as soon as possible.

We fully understand docents hesitation to work in close contact with multiple students due to the ever-evolving Covid virus. We have high hopes for the Spring of '23. We are keeping our fingers crossed and hoping for better days ahead.

Thanks, again. Stay healthy and safe. We'll stay in contact.

In Memory of Beloved PWA Member, Birder, and Tour Leader Andy LaCasse (1942-2022)

by Len Nelson, Research Chair



Without the inspiration, insights and education I absorbed from Andy Lacasse, I would not be doing the research and bird monitoring work that absorbs and enriches my life (and wetland bird life) today. I owe him a great deal; the knowledge and experience that he shared with me and many others enables us to better understand and support our birds and wildlife.

Andy Lacasse built and installed ten tree swallow houses at Shollenberger Park in Petaluma in the early spring of 2004. He was amazed that tree swallows and bluebirds began competing for these structures as soon as he had installed one and had hardly stepped away to install another! Such is the plight of these cavity nesting birds in an environment that is practically devoid of natural cavities in old, limb-lost trees that are now mostly cut down. Since then, the number of tree swallow/bluebird houses has expanded to 60, located at Shollenberger, Ellis Creek, and Tolay Regional Park, most of which were built by Andy, and then some by me.

Each fall, Andy and I would visit each of his tree swallow houses to clean them out in preparation for the next year's swallow nesting season. As we did so, we'd find that some had unhatched eggs and others dead chicks of various ages, and as we went about this work, I wondered how many eggs had actually been laid and how many chicks had hatched and how many of those had been fortunate enough to fledge.

In the fall of 2006, Melissa Pitkin of Point Blue (then PRBO) asked us to monitor the nests, using the protocol of the Golondrinas de las Americas project. It involved a lot of note taking at each nest and input to Excel spreadsheets. Learning this, Andy exclaimed, “That sure isn’t me!” But I responded, “That sure is me!” We were a perfect team, with Andy’s joy of discovery and motivation, and my interest in tracking the data for better understanding.

Andy continued to participate in twice-monthly bird counts and to guide bird walks for the public until the last few months before he passed, on May 22, 2022.

Spring Feather Fest

Sheryl Nadeau, Event Coordinator



The Spring Feather Fest finally came back to life after a 2-year absence. 27 children along with 20 volunteers helped make the whole day a wonderful success. This was a good turn out when considering the many activities that children have to choose among this time of year.

Kris Brook and her husband showed up extra early to erect the awning that provided both shade and a gathering place. It held steady as the wind picked up.

There were six birding teams that were split equally between Shollenberger Park and Ellis Creek. The team with the most birds on their birding lists came up with a total of 44 species. The Ellis Creek teams, which had the advantage of water filled ponds, scored everything from Double-crest Cormorants to a Barn Owl; the Shollenberger teams did nicely with a Green Heron, an Avocet with chicks and a Brewers Blackbird.

There were a few new twists to this year's event. A free raffle of a painted owl and a bird book were given away. And a The Bird Rescue Center (BRC) field team joined the program. They set up before the children returned from their bird walks in order to surprise them. The BRC brought two of their "Bird Ambassadors," a Screech Owl and a Great Horned Owl. They also prepared a table of visual displays for the children to enjoy. The interaction between the bird handlers and the children was wonderful – a definite hit!

The day ended with the traditional pizza lunch with cookies for desert. This presented the opportunity to introduce the Field Guide, which resulted in five books being sold.



Although the age range of participating children is 6-12, two thirds of the children were eight-years-old or younger. Our feedback indicated that many of the younger children lost interest in birding on the longer walks. As we have no control of the age of the participants, there is some thought of shortening our next event by 30 minutes, starting at 9:30 instead of 9:00

The next children's birding event, CBC4kids, is scheduled for December 31. Let's hope that we are all healthy and the rains have arrived so we can have another beautiful day with the birds. Thanks to all the wonderful volunteers who helped make the day so successful!

PWA Monitoring Program

Len Nelson, Chair

Contact Len should you be interest in joining or have questions: lennelsn@comcast.net

Tree Swallows: (preliminary report)

In total, there are 60 Tree Swallow / Western Bluebird houses located in Shollenberger, Ellis Creek and Tolay Lake Regional Park. This year, the season ended the last week of August and for the 2 nesting periods that occurred between mid-April and the end of August: 412 chicks hatched of which 348 fledged and 64 did not for a successful fledging ratio of 84.5%, which is historically quite good. The full report will follow in about 30 days. It will break out the results by area, by nesting and by species.

Barn Owls:

There are 16 Barn Owl boxes located in Ellis Creek. One of them near Pond B has a camcorder in it. About May 10th, there were 8 eggs laid and on or about 6/14 what would develop into 7 chicks began to hatch. As of August 8th, 2 of the 8 chicks are ready to fledge and the others are in various stages hoping to do the same in the next few weeks. Each year, since 2014, the PWA dissects this one nest box to determine the number of creatures consumed and their particular species. Does the dissecting activity sound interesting and fun to you? If so, contact Len Nelson

Great Blue Heron; Great Egret and Double-crested Cormorant colony site at Ellis Creek

Since 2010, there is one Eucalyptus tree located just east of Pond D in which, activity has been monitored for Audubon Canyon Ranch by PWA docents. In 2022, the activity was monitored by PWA docents Len Nelson and Linda Sheppard

The history of those findings can be found on the PWA web site but here is what was recorded in the 2022 season which began 3/1 and ended 6/26.

13 Great Blue Heron nests produced 24 chicks that fledged

24 Great Egret nests produced 51 chicks that fledged

36 Double-crested Cormorant nests produced at least 72 chicks that fledged

See the PWA web site for historical details.

Bird Surveys:

The PWA has conducted bi-monthly bird surveys at Shollenberger since 2006 and at Ellis Creek since it opened to the public in 2011. Details are to be found on the PWA website.

PWA Opportunities

The position of President will be open as of June 2023

Vice President, an Officer on PWA Board

Restoration and Maintenance, a Chair on the Board

2 Members at Large to sit on the Board with voting rights

Various volunteer duties to do our many tasks and add new ones, e.g.:

Park Volunteer

Dogs Off-Leash

Homeless Encampments

Guided Walks

PWA Board

Officers:	
President	John Shribbs
Vice President	vacant
Secretary	Susan Kraemer
Treasurer	Jerry Taylor
Chairs:	
PR/Outreach	Mary Kadri
Docent Development	Anne Taylor
Education	Carol Homrighouse
Research	Len Nelson
Maintenance and Restoration	Vacant
Electronic Media	John Shribbs
Members at Large (2)	Keith White 1 vacant position