



**PETALUMA WETLANDS ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER**  
**P.O. Box 973**  
**Petaluma, CA 94953-0973**

**[www.petalumawetlandspark.org](http://www.petalumawetlandspark.org)**

**Chairman: Gerald Moore [glmemoore@comcast.net](mailto:glmemoore@comcast.net) Tours: Bob Dyer [nrdyer@comcast.net](mailto:nrdyer@comcast.net)**  
**Newsletter Editor: Jane Merryman [jane@sonic.net](mailto:jane@sonic.net) Secretary: Mary Edith Moore**

**Providing Education in and Stewardship of Petaluma's Public Wetlands**

**Summer 2005**

### **New Quarterly Publication**

Greetings! This newsletter is the first of what we hope will be a quarterly publication for members of Petaluma Wetlands Alliance and others interested in our public wetlands. The majority of these newsletters will be sent via e-mail to minimize our costs. We'll send a copy through the postal service to people without e-mail. Our goal is to keep you informed about recent events involving PWA and provide updates about what is happening at our wetlands. We will also publish a list of upcoming events in which you may want to participate. Additional information can always be found on our great Web site.

PWA is a committee of Madrone Audubon, located in Santa Rosa, California. We are a nonprofit and operate under Madrone's constitution, but we also have our own operating policies and board of eleven people, including a chairperson and a recording secretary. We are building an associate membership of wetlands lovers who (if they donate at least \$25/year/person) will also be given membership in Madrone Audubon. Please enjoy these newsletters and help us create the ultimate support group that will provide the best "education in and stewardship of our public wetlands."

### **2004/05 Accomplishments and 2005/06 Goals**

**by Gerald Moore, Chairman**

I would like to briefly list our activities over the last year and our goals for the upcoming year. Our year, like Madrone Audubon's, runs from July 1 to June 30.

#### **Last year we did the following:**

1. Started a yearlong bird survey at Shollenberger Park on September 24, 2004. This weekly survey will run for one year and catalog all the birds seen in or from Shollenberger Park. The data will be shared with other environmental and research groups.
2. Improved relationships with city staff.
3. Visited Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Preserve in November to get long-term growth ideas for

PWA and Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary in June to get ideas on making our new polishing wetlands at Gray's Ranch also function successfully as a wildlife sanctuary.

4. Received a \$15K Supplemental Environmental Project grant in October 2004, which helped pay for the following:
  - new docent training course in October
  - hands-on activities for third grade students, both in the classroom and at the wetlands, and an art/photography/poetry contest for high school students
  - meeting/lecture series for the public (we held five such meetings)
  - cleaning and renovating the Shollenberger kiosks and developing new posters for kiosk #5 to explain the river dredging story to the public
  - initiating plans for a long-term plant restoration program for Shollenberger/Alman marsh, including cutting cardoon and hardinggrass seed heads with volunteer help
  - student activities/picnic area at Shollenberger Park
  - new, professional-looking bird list
5. Expanded the tree swallow nesting box program.
6. Created a procedure to keep our Web site updated.

**Our goals for next year include:**

1. Hold another new-docent course starting on September 24, 2005.
2. Fine-tune the hands-on activities program for third graders.
3. Finish the regular bird survey in September 2005 and develop a monthly or semimonthly survey plan with Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO).
4. Strengthen the "Associate Membership" concept by continued public meetings and interactive projects with associate members.
5. Plan local fund-raising activities.
6. Finish and get city approval of a weed management plan and a marsh restoration plan; start weed removal projects.
7. Look for grant money for education and weed management projects.
8. Strengthen our relationship with PRBO, which will have its new headquarters at the park starting in January 2006.
9. Recruit board members to fill vacant slots.
10. Start a quarterly e-newsletter.

### **PWA Public Meeting in September**

On September 20 at 7:00 p.m. at Lucchesi Community Center, PWA will hold a public meeting. Our featured speaker will be Ellie Cohen, the executive director of PRBO Conservation Science. She will speak on “The Role of PRBO in Conservation Science and How PRBO Envisions Interacting with the Petaluma Community.” Don’t miss this dynamic, enthusiastic talk by the leader of our newest professional environmental neighbor. PRBO employs more than fifty scientists who do research around the country on the health of ecosystems by using birds as environmental indicators.

### **Heron and Egret Colony #121 – Shollenberger’s Own**

**by Bob Dyer**

Marsh docent Len Nelson and I have been tracking activity at the heron and egret colony across the river from Shollenberger for the past three years. We follow a reporting protocol developed by the Cypress Grove Research Center in Bolinas and count the number of nests by species and chicks per nest. Cypress Grove is studying all the Bay Area colonies. One measure of the health of our environment is whether these birds prosper.

I’m pleased to report that “our” birds are doing very well, thank you! There has been a slow but steady increase in productivity at #121. Here are the official results for 2005:

Great Egret	25 nests with chicks	58 chicks
Snowy Egret	4 nests with chicks	8 chicks
Great Blue Heron	1 nest with chicks	2 chicks

We know there were more Snowy Egret chicks than reflected above but they mature much quicker than the Great Egret chicks *and we may only report chicks that we can assign to specific nests*. The Snowy Egret chicks leave their nests to perch on nearby branches so soon that we often cannot assign them to any given nest.

Most of the chicks will be at the colony into August. Then they will depart for good, independent of their parents and on their own.

### **Training for New Docents**

Our five-week training course for new docents will start on 24 September and run for five Saturday mornings, 8:30 until noon. Please consider becoming a Shollenberger Park docent. Details are on our website, or call 763-2934.