



**PETALUMA WETLANDS ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER**  
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**Providing Education in and Stewardship of Petaluma's Public Wetlands.**

## **Winter 2007**

### **Update on Habitat Restoration Program**

**by Gerald Moore**

Four of us, including John Shribbs and one of his students, have been spot spraying Roundup on Italian thistle and hardinggrass in Shollenberger Park and Alman Marsh. By spot spraying, we identify an individual plant and spray only that plant with our small, focused sprayer. To date, we have finished spraying in Alman Marsh and are half done with Shollenberger Park. We have also removed all of the cardoon from Alman Marsh by a technique of cutting the plant off near the ground and painting the stump(s) with a solution of 25 percent Roundup using a one-inch paint brush. According to the California weed management people, this is the definitive treatment for cardoon (and it is easy).

Last year, John Shribbs started a native plant nursery at Casa Grande High School, and they were able to grow several thousand plants, mostly native grasses, including meadow barley and creeping wild rye. We have been working with John to selectively plant these new species in areas near where we sprayed a weed. This is a selective replacement experiment to see if the natives can take hold in the free space we created and compete with the remaining noninvasive weeds in the area. So far, about 2,000 native grass, shrub, and flower plants have been placed. John has some special dibbles that take the work out of putting in grass plants, thus the process moves very quickly. The main idea is to get the new plants in now so they can use the wet ground to establish themselves. We could use a few more volunteers on these restoration projects. If you have two to three free weekend hours, contact us at 763-3577.

### **PWA Docents Participate in Flyway Festival**

**by Bob Dyer**

The 11<sup>th</sup> annual San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival was held on February 2 to 4, 2007, and a number of our docents served as volunteers. The Flyway Festival celebrates the annual migration through the San Francisco Bay Estuary of more than one million shorebirds and hundreds of thousands of ducks and geese, hawks, and even butterflies. We staffed a table at the Wildlife and Bird Exposition held at Mare Island, providing information about Shollenberger Park and the Petaluma Wetlands to members of the public. Additionally, docents conducted bird tours at Shollenberger for 40 people, providing close-up views of a number of species of migratory waterfowl.

**Website Note:** We have shortened the URL of our website to [www.petalumawetlands.org](http://www.petalumawetlands.org) to make it easier to remember. The old address will still work for a year or two.

## **Shollenberger Docents Share Knowledge and Love of Nature**

**by Sharon Mansfield**

A lively juvenile red-tailed hawk, busy redwing blackbirds preparing to nest, a snowy egret flashing a yellow foot along the freshwater willows, and smiling docents meet eager school children who are visiting Shollenberger wetlands. Spring season at Shollenberger will bring docents and 350-plus children together again to enjoy the air of new adventures to look, listen, and learn in the wetlands. Full hands-on activities in the classroom and at the park will keep docents busy introducing to children the concepts of animal adaptations in the fragile environment of the Petaluma wetlands. *Kudos to our incredibly dedicated group of docents for sharing their knowledge and love of nature with new generations of nature's caregivers.*

Our educational program has been so successful that we now have a waiting list of classes that want to participate in our programs. So that more classes can be scheduled in the next school year, the Petaluma Wetlands Alliance will be conducting a new docent training beginning in September. Please see our web site at [www.petalumawetlands.org](http://www.petalumawetlands.org) and contact Gerald Moore at 763-3577 or Bob Dyer at 763-2934 for further information.

## **Next Docent Training Class**

**by Gerald Moore**

Each year PWA holds a training class for new docents. This year's class will start on Friday, 14 September (8:30 a.m. to noon) and run for six consecutive Fridays. Seasoned docents are invited to attend any part of the class as refresher training. It is not too early to look for candidates for this class. A major focus is to find people who will work with our grade school (grades two to four) program. There is a \$40 cost for the training materials. Please let us know if you, or anybody you know, might be interested in the course. To learn more, call Bob at 763-2934 or Gerald at 763-3577. We have become a highly respected component of the local education community, and we have a lot of fun interpreting the wetlands for young and old.

## **New Migratory Bird Walks Provided to School Children**

**by Bob Dyer**

Our education programs provided services to more than 750 school children at Shollenberger Park last year. Because of an ever-increasing demand, we decided to develop new activities that could be provided during the January and February winter months during which we had previously offered limited services.

Since Shollenberger Park and Gray's Ranch provide an important winter habitat for migratory birds to rest and find food, docents fashioned activities relating to bird migration. A 40-minute PowerPoint presentation was shown in elementary classrooms by docents Len Nelson and Kathleen Murry, followed by a 90-minute walk at the park, led by teams of four docents and coordinated by Bob Dyer.

The purpose was to assist students to learn about the principles of migration and actually observe a number of migratory species. Students used color placards to help identify the birds, learned how to use binoculars, and used check-off lists to record the birds that were observed.

Although the weather can be challenging during this time of year, in-class and at-the-park services were ultimately provided to more than 160 children. About 50 supporting teachers and adults accompanied the children and were also able to witness the beauty of migratory ducks, shorebirds, and sparrows.