



# SAVE WETLANDS

*Newsletter of the Citizens Committee To Complete The Refuge*

Newsletter Issue 45

Fall 2015



*Photo of Coyote Hills Regional Park and Patterson Ranch (to the left) and Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge courtesy of Jerry Ting*

This stunning photo is a fitting tribute to Congressman Don Edwards, who passed away this year. If not for his valiant efforts, the vision of Art Olgivie, and the passion, tenacity and dedication of this group, there would be no Refuge to complete and development would have marched right up to the edges of the bay.

But as satisfying as this view may be, there are still important places along the edges of the bay that should be protected and restored. Instead, these areas are being considered for massive developments. Most notably, the 1433 acres of salt ponds along the edges of the bay in Redwood City and over 500 acres of wetlands and uplands at the head of Mowry Slough in Newark.

These two sites in particular possess unique attributes that cannot easily be replicated within the lands currently owned by the Refuge. The salt ponds in Redwood City could provide an important hedge for tidal marsh species against sea level rise. The proximity of the Port of Redwood City to the site, and the potential for beneficial reuse of dredge spoils, could provide the necessary lifts of sediment to maintain high marsh as sea level rises.

The 500+ acres of uplands and wetlands at the head of Mowry Slough create a diverse mosaic of habitats ranging from

freshwater seeps and open water, to seasonal wetlands, tidal wetlands, and increasingly rare transition zone and uplands habitats.

We are committed to honoring the memory of Congressman Edwards, and Ralph Nobles who also passed away this year, by continuing the work to complete the Refuge.

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## Welcome Aboard Chris Barr

I am so honored to be back at the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex and I feel honored to be so welcomed back by the Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge. This is my second tour of duty at the Complex; I was here from 1997-2000 as the Refuge Manager for Salinas River NWR and Ellicott Slough NWR's with collateral law enforcement and maintenance supervisor responsibilities. The amazing partnerships and active citizenry has drawn me back to the bay.

I have a Bachelor's degree in Natural Resources Management from California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo. Upon graduation in March 1992 I started my career with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, at the Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge working on the California Condor Recovery Program. In 1997 I joined the San Francisco Bay NWC and the left in 2000 to be the first Refuge Manager of Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes NWR located in Guadalupe, California.

I have been working as a Deputy Project Leader on National Wildlife Refuges beginning in 2005 at Hopper Mountain NWR, then Sacramento NWR, and here now back with all of you at the wonderful San Francisco Bay NWR Complex.

The Central coast of California from San Francisco Bay to San Luis Obispo is where you can find me for when I'm not working. I enjoy kayaking, surfing, birdwatching, beachcombing, or just taking a leisurely stroll along a coastal trail. I'm so proud of the many divers organizations who have helped protect and restore California's diverse coastal treasures.



## Citizens for Alameda's Last Marshlands

Suspense is always a factor when monitoring endangered species for success. We're happy to report that the Least Terns at AWR had another good year, fledging 300+ (estimate yet to be refined) youngsters. There were challenges for them from the usual suspects: Peregrine Falcons, American Kestrels, and Ravens.

Caspian Terns returned (not seen breeding at the site since 1999) in 2014 and 2015. New habitat lured them to set up a wonderfully noisy community at the West Wetlands. An all-bird survey in July this year found 211 adults, 70 fledglings, and 20 chicks, numbers higher than 2014 at the colony.

Alameda's Breakwater Island hosted many Brown Pelicans this summer with 5000+ in late June and near a 1000 through July and August. The June number was "the highest aggregation in California" at the time according to one pelican biologist. Following the Refugio oil spill earlier this year, affected pelicans

were cleaned and fitted with radio transmitters in Southern California before release. What a delightful surprise to hear that the satellite found rehabbed pelican(s) in Alameda, likely roosting on the crowded breakwater.

Volunteers at AWR deserve huge accolades. In winter they weed and carry "tern furniture" off and on the colony. They repair damaged portions of the chick fence around the 10 acre enclosure. All-bird surveys are conducted twice monthly. Total (2014-2015 season): 202 volunteers, 729.2 hrs. In summer they monitor the terns daily from dawn to dusk reporting problems and predator activity. Estimated total based on assigned shifts: 325 volunteers, 975 hours. USFWS and VA are such important parts of the AWR family. Working together makes it work!

Thanks to ALL!

Leora Feeney, co-chair FAWR  
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The slough August 1974

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## Whisting Wings and Pintail Duck Clubs Update

As we have been reporting for quite some time, CCCR filed a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) lawsuit against the City of Newark in 2010 because the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) approved by the City for development of the duck clubs was so severely flawed. That lawsuit was followed by a second as the City incorporated the same approvals into their general plan update EIR before our first lawsuit was resolved.

After five long years and many unexpected twists and turns, our lawsuits were successfully concluded this year. We have prevailed!

We could not have undertaken this monumental effort without the generous support of our members and friends, the dedication and hard work of our litigation team, and our talented attorneys (Brian Gaffney, Keith Wagner, Tom Lippe, Kelly Franger, and their staffs). We owe you all a huge "Thank you!!" Thanks must also be given to the Rose Foundation, San Francisco Baykeeper, the Ohlone Audubon Society, and Save the Bay for their support.

What does this legal victory mean for the land? It has bought us time. In 2009, the City anticipated development of Area 3 and 4 would take place between 2011 and 2015. During that period, regulatory and resource agencies have been made aware of the proposed project and have weighed in with significant comments regarding the value of the lands and the inadequacy of the proposed mitigation for the filling of up to 85 acres of wetlands. The Tidal Marsh Ecosystem Recovery Plan has been released and identifies all of Area 4 as valuable for future transition zone habitat. The Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Update has recently been released and has reiterated the value of the site for recovery of transition zone habitat.

Looking along the edges of the south bay, it is evident that few opportunities exist to recapture transition zone habitat. In most places, we have developed right up to the very edges of the salt ponds and bay.

Nearly one half of the 560 acres of Area 4 are jurisdictional wetlands. And the endangered salt marsh harvest mouse has been documented to occur on the site.



Photo courtesy of Jerry Ting

Setting aside our focus on preserving habitat, there are other important societal reasons why this site should not be developed. As a society, how much longer are we willing to support the development of flood prone areas? Areas that the public, not the developers, will have to bear the financial burdens of future flood protection.

The entirety of the site is within the 100-year flood plain. Since the levees along Mowry Slough were not designed for flood control, the proposed plan would require the import of over two million cubic yards of fill to raise the elevation of the land out of the 100-year flood plain, in some places 10 to 15 feet of fill would be required. Even with the massive import of fill material, the EIR admits that by 2089, under what the EIR conservatively considered a "high" rate of sea level rise, the site will likely require other mitigation measures to protect the developed areas from flooding.

Most of us realize the fight to protect important lands is a long process, and we must be prepared to go many rounds. CCCR was willing to fire the first salvo, and is committed to continuing the fight to protect these lands.

## Charleston Slough

Charleston Slough is two miles from my house. I fell in love with it when it was the most beautiful cord grass marsh I had ever seen. My friend Nancy Holmes and I used to climb over fences to get down there, with little regard for the No Trespassing signs.

You can imagine how stunned we were to go down to the bay one day in 1975 and find Charleston Slough turned into a lake! It took some detective work to discover that the Slough was leased to a duck hunting club by the salt company that owned it. The transformation came when a 60 inch pipe through the levee on the bay had been removed, and a 54 inch one installed.

Forty years have passed. Agencies became involved. Mountain View accepted the land as a gift from the new salt company that had acquired it. Repeated efforts were made to bring back tidal

marsh, although one old bay biologist stated that in his opinion, that mud would not support salt water marsh again. The local Audubon Society engaged a couple of Stanford grad students to study the hydrology. Two noted water management companies installed systems in the outer levee. The result is what you see today—fine productive mud flat with a wealth of bird life, but no cord grass.

The latest suggestion by the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project, is to connect Charleston Slough to the tidal marsh restoration of ponds A1 and A2 in Mountain View.

Florence LaRiviere  
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Save Wetlands Fall 2015



# What Have CCCR Members Been Up To?

CCCR is an all volunteer wetlands advocacy non-profit. So what have CCCR members done for the Refuge, wetlands, special status species and the environment this year?

**We have devoted over 4,000 hours attending meetings, writing comment letters, etc. on the following projects:**

1433 acres of salt ponds in Redwood City  
Newark Areas 3 & 4 lawsuit  
City of Newark General Plan EIR lawsuit  
Byxbee Park Planning issues  
Caltrans proposed project Niles Canyon  
Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan SF Bay Estuary  
Foster City Marina Center Proposal  
Oakland Coliseum Specific Area Plan  
Oracle Design Tech High School  
Patterson Ranch (Fremont)  
Palo Alto anaerobic digester on parklands  
Phase 2 South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project  
Proposed flood control project for San Francisquito Creek (impacting the Faber Tract)  
Redwood City Inner Harbor Specific Plan  
Sandmining in San Francisco Bay  
Shoreline Study (Alviso)  
Torian Project (Newark)

A little further inland we have commented on the proposed expansion of the Carnegie SVRA into Tesla Park, an area of incredible species and habitat biodiversity and numerous federal

and state listed species.

**We have commented on federal and state wetland policy issues such as:**  
USACE Clean Water Act

**We participated as stakeholders or represented CCCR at:**

State Wetlands and Riparian Area Protection Policy  
South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project  
San Francisco Bay Joint Venture  
San Francisco Estuary Partnership  
Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Update  
Friends of the Estuary  
Implementation Committee of the Estuary Partnership  
Loma Prieta Conservation Council  
SCVAS Environmental Action Committee  
Santa Clara County Conservation Council  
Shoreline Advocacy Workshop  
We hosted a meeting with USFWS and CDFW to discuss Bay Area endangered species issues.  
We co-sponsored the Habitat Means Home Poster Contest for K-6 students Fremont, Newark, and New Haven public schools.  
Constructed Least Tern chalets.

These are just the highlights of the efforts our all volunteer membership have undertaken to ensure the protection of wetlands and endangered species, and to Complete the Refuge!

## Friends of Redwood City

At last! After years of preparation, the levee adjacent to Smith Slough on Inner Bair Island is scheduled to be breached by the end of this year.

We've had a front row seat for this USFWS restoration project, watching barges, trucks and heavy equipment deliver dredge material and fill to raise the elevation and create various features for the new marsh.

We only wish that Ralph Nobles could be here to see the Bay waters rush in. With his passing earlier this year, Ralph just missed seeing the final piece of his Bair Island legacy restored to tidal marsh. The efforts of Ralph and Carolyn Nobles to save these beautiful islands from development continue to be an inspiration for all of us.

We are still waiting for the US Environmental Protection Agency's jurisdictional determination on Cargill's 1400 acres of Redwood City salt ponds, and for the new development proposal from Cargill/DMB that is expected to follow this decision.

Meanwhile, Matt Leddy continues his regular observations at this site where he has documented the use of Crystallizer Pond 1 by a variety of migratory shorebirds over the past five years. A pattern has emerged: Hundreds of semipalmated plovers and a few least sandpipers begin arriving in late summer to roost on the dry pond during high tides.

In the fall when the pond begins filling with rainwater, western sandpipers along with dunlin join in to forage and high-tide roost



*Avocets foraging in crystallizer Pond 1 Photo courtesy of Matt Leddy*

in the pond, sometimes numbering in the thousands. As accumulated rainfall becomes too deep in early winter, the smaller shorebirds leave and larger black-necked stilts and American avocets arrive to forage and roost into March.

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## Tribute to Ralph Nobles

*Tribute by Florence LaRiviere*

In the spring of 1982, Ralph Nobles drove home from the airport just in time to make it to the Redwood City Council Meeting. It was the night they were voting on a huge development on Bair Island, 3,000 acres of former tidal marsh along Bayshore Freeway near Whipple Avenue that had been levied from the bay for commercial use.

Ralph was stunned to witness the devastating vote in favor of the Mobile Lands massive plan. He stood around the foyer of the meeting room after the vote with a group of like-minded residents. What to do?

They took a daring step, and decided to file a petition to referend the council's action.

The group had the tremendous impetus that came from their conviction that they were doing the right thing for their town, for the peninsula, and for that site.

Ralph and his wife Carolyn opened their home to regular meetings. It was a full-blown campaign, with flyers, talks to all manner of groups, even including street corner public demonstrations. Imagine the gloom when, on election day, they lost, but Carolyn went down to the city hall the next day to watch the absentee ballot count. Those votes reversed the rest, leading to a victory by 40 votes!

Ralph had been traveling on the East Coast, but Carolyn didn't mind waking him from a sound sleep to tell him that good news. He called her back the next morning to tell her about the dream he had that they had won! Indeed they had.

*Tribute by Arthur Feinstein*

Ralph epitomized the strengths of the Citizens Committee.

A brilliant scientist giving us the ability to respond to environmental documents with great expertise, a person passionately dedicated to preserving our Bay and its wetlands and, most of all, the nicest person imaginable.

I had the wonderful opportunity to spend a week with Ralph in Venezuela helping a fishing village in its struggle with Cargill Salt, striving to keep Cargill from diking off parts of Lake Maracaibo for salt ponds.

Charismatic as always, everyone wanted to talk to Ralph, often saying he looked like a movie star. Courteous and engaging, Ralph made the trip a huge success.

We shared wonderful experiences including a canoe ride with the fisherman to an existing Cargill levee - on which walked guards with submachine guns - and our guides taunted them!! Quite exciting - to say nothing of our engine failing in the middle of a marsh.

But my best memory is simply having spent so much time with Ralph.



*Tribute by Sandra Cooperman*

As the slow path to the restoration of Bair Island to a tidal salt marsh continues, it is time to honor the man who had this vision over 30 years ago. Ralph Nobles, who died February 20, 2015, knew in his heart that building on irreplaceable wetlands was bad for us and bad for the planet.

In 1983 in response to the Redwood City Council plan to allow Mobil Oil to build a huge development on Bair Island, Ralph and his wife Carolyn responded by forming Friends of Redwood City and leading a referendum whose goal was to stop the development and return the diked salt flats to a salt marsh. The history of the Friends and the numerous individuals and environmental groups that rose to the challenge is the stuff of legends; Bair Island is now part of the Don Edwards Wildlife Refuge.

Ralph was an intelligent, fearless, and tenacious leader. He was also a gentle man with a wry sense of humor. Fighting City Hall was an uphill battle but Ralph believed that the Friends would prevail. His legacy, along with Carolyn's, and all the people engaged along the way, resides in the permanent refuge called Bair Island.





## Remembering the Honorable Don Edwards January 6, 1915- October 2, 2015



Photo courtesy of USFWS

### **Tribute by Florence LaRiviere**

Many people serve in the United States Congress. Some of them have distinguished careers. A few leave legacies that are incredible gifts for long into the future.

Such a one was our own Congressman Don Edwards. His wildlife refuge stretches along the shoreline of San Francisco Bay from San Mateo south through Alviso and north on the west side to include the marshes of Redwood City.

Our debt to him is one we could never repay. Our years with him showed how a brilliant legislator in harmony with the public, can bring about profound changes.

***“It is the culmination of a great and sustained community effort.”***

That line was a quote in the Merc when the Environmental Education Center in Alviso was having ground breaking, December 1977.

I think it was one morning in the late 1960’s that I read a small notice in the Mercury News inviting anyone worried at the great rate the bay’s marshes were being destroyed, to come to an office in San Jose the following day.

That was my first meeting with Art Ogilvie, a Santa Clara County planner who had the show-stopping idea that we could have a national wildlife refuge here, to save our remaining wetlands!

We went to every conceivable public meeting, showing pictures of our remarkable wildlife, and decrying the rapid destruction of most of the lands along the shoreline.

Then we arrived at the crucial moment—we had to have a member of congress to carry our bill to establish what proved to be a landmark, the first urban wildlife refuge in the nation.

As I remember, Art Ogilvie and Tom Harvey, biology professor at San Jose State, made the fateful visit to Congressman Don Edwards.

They went, aware of his civil rights and peace activism, but knowing nothing about his environmental concerns. First, he took that most important beginning step—he listened to them.

He recognized saving these lands was the right thing to do, and he had the vision and the political skill to bring along the entire Bay Area congressional delegation, with no regard to political party. Still, four years passed before his bill was enacted, and President Nixon signed it into law.

That was 1972-- we dusted off our hands, and had a party with Mr. Edwards to celebrate.



Refuge EEC groundbreaking ceremony, 1977. From left to right, Rod Diridon, Santa Clara Valley Supervisor, Art Ogilvie, Santa Clara County Planner, Congressman Don Edwards, and Refuge manager Bob Personius. Photo courtesy of Santa Clara County.



An iconic view of tidal marshlands from the Refuge Headquarters looking towards the Dumbarton Bridge. Before the Refuge was established there was a proposal to develop a vast sea of condominiums on these lands. Photo courtesy of Sam High

We felt pretty smug, in fact, it took us until 1986 to take another look and realize we were sadly lacking in a variety of habitat types. The only solution was to return to our beloved congressman. And we did. His response was an immediate yes!

This time, with the wonderful San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge already established, and soon to be named in his honor, the public responded with enthusiasm, and four hundred people came to Ohlone College to support Mr. Edwards at a public meeting on the issue.



Photo courtesy of USFWS

For once the opposition was wonderfully outnumbered by a large, enthusiastic and vocal group. This time, his bill was enacted the first year he proposed it, another red letter day—in October 1988!

In 1995, the Refuge was appropriately renamed the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

Today the Refuge spans 30,000 acres of the South Bay protecting a diversity of habitats including salt ponds, tidal marshes, seasonal wetlands and vernal pools, and uplands.

Mr. Edwards’ living legacy is the marshes of San Francisco Bay, the wildlife that inhabits them, clean air and water. For our remarkable suite of shorebirds, waterfowl, fish and small mammals, these protected lands mean life itself.

For residents of the Bay Area these lands provide places of serenity, places to escape the frantic pace of urban life, and opportunities to slow down and reconnect with the natural world. The next time you visit the Refuge and walk along the marshes, or marvel at the beauty of birds in flight, or even better, share the experience with friends and loved ones, please say a “Thank you!” to Congressman Edwards.

We share the void his family feels now, but what an incomparable gift he has left to us all.



# Inner Bair Island Levee Breach

December 10, 2015 was slated to be a blustery and rainy day, not that any of us were complaining, but it was also the day of the long awaited levee breach of Inner Bair Island. We all held our collective breaths, piled on the warm clothing, raincoats, and rainboots, and ventured out to the event.



Anne Morkill, San Francisco Bay Refuge Complex Manager, presided over the formal portion of the event. Clyde Morris, former refuge manager of the DESFBNWR, gave a great overview of the long history that brought us to this wonderful day. He touched on the battles fought to protect the lands, the scramble to find funding to acquire the lands, and the many challenges to restore the lands once acquired. Arthur Feinstein, representing CCCR, provided some insight into the many strategies utilized to protect the lands from development, as did Sandra Cooperman of Friends of Redwood City. Pennisula Open Space Trust, the group that played a pivotal role in the acquisition, was well represented by Walter Moore. Scott Wilson represented California Fish and Wildlife as the Department owns a portion of the Bair Island complex and partners with the Refuge. Ducks Unlimited has been implementing the restoration and was represented by Mark Biddlecomb. Anna Eshoo and Jackie Speier could not attend as they were busy in D.C., but were represented by their staff, Christine Padilla and Katrina Rill, respectively.

Notably missing from the day were Ralph and Carolyn Nobles, who devoted so many years of their lives fighting to protect these lands from the massive development that was proposed.



As the speakers finished, the winds blew the rain clouds away and we were awash in blue skies and sunshine for the much anticipated levee breach. We trudged through the mud out to where the levee was to be breached. It was a moment nearly thirty-five years in the making, we held our breathes in anticipation. There was a collective cheer by all as the excavator dug away material and waters from Smith Slough once again flowed through Inner Bair.



It was a wonderful and inspiring day, filled with old friends, all brought together by the common desire to preserve these lands for future generations. But it could have turned out differently without the dedication of people like Ralph and Carolyn.

In 1982 there were plans for nearly 4800 housing units and over two million square feet of commercial, retail, office, hotel and convention, and research and development uses.



A huge “Thank you!” to the Friends of Redwood City and CCCR members who fought to preserve these lands!

# Fremont

**Caltrans and the Niles Canyon Corridor:** Earlier this year Caltrans released its Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the proposed Alameda Creek Bridge Replacement. Many organizations pressed Caltrans to provide alternatives that analyzed alignments for speeds lower than 45 mph, this was not reflected in the DEIR. Potentially, in a response to the many comments received, Caltrans announced this fall that it will recirculate the DEIR before the end of this year. Let’s hope the REIR will analyze new alternatives as the public has urged.

This fall, Caltrans held a public scoping session for additional “safety” improvements within the Niles Canyon corridor. CCCR commends Caltrans for pulling back from its 2010 proposal. The proposed safety” project covers everything from replacement and installation of traffic signs, rock wall drapery, removal of fixed objects (including trees), curve “improvements” and shoulder widening. The meeting was well attended, and most in attendance were very vocal in expressing concerns that the “safety improvement” projects might not improve safety at all, but instead result in drivers driving at increased speeds through the canyon. The public was emphatic that the scenic, biotic, and historic features of the canyon must be preserved. Caltrans

anticipates the draft EIR will be released in 2016. You can find more information on both projects at: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist4/nilescanyon/>

**Habitat Means Home Poster Contest:** This year, marked the ninth year of the contest and we received 275 posters. We were fortunate to have several dignitaries help present the awards this year, Ayn Wieskamp (EBRPD), Andrae Macapinlac (State Senator Bob Wieckowski’s District Office), and Dr. Yang Shao (FUSD) graciously gave of their time to present the award certificates. Kristina Parkinson, CHRP naturalist, was also present. This year our winning posters went on tour, first on display at the Coyote Hills visitor center, then the EBRPD Board of Directors meeting room and finally on to State Senator Bob Wieckowski’s District Office. Senator Wieckowski hosted an ice cream social for the winners, their families, principals, and teachers. Thank you to EBRPD Board of Directors and Senator Wieckowski for their recognition of these students’ talents and appreciation of the natural environment!

Carin High  
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# SaveWetlands In Mayhews

As Monarch butterflies return to Mexico on their winter migration, so too does the City of Newark flutter back to development plans for Area 4. City staff made minor changes in the Environmental Impact Report and Development Agreement which were later approved by the city council. None of these changes address protection of wetlands and associated habitat on Area 4.

The city recently held a public meeting to discuss a range of options for relocation of the city hall, police department and library. One relocation option was the sports fields at the Silliman recreation and swim complex near Area 4. The consultants reasoned that this location would encourage recreational and entertainment uses in nearby Areas 3 and 4. It appears that the consultants, Group 4, and the city are not on the same page. The city still plans over a thousand homes on

Areas 3 and 4.

The city is making no headway in preserving wetlands and associated uplands. More development is Newark’s answer to habitat preservation. While other cities, counties and agencies are calling for preservation of wetlands and nearby uplands calling them our “green defense”, Newark is fluttering about in its own direction.

While other cities and counties are taking responsibility for protecting habitat and current developed areas, Newark city staff believes it is not their responsibility. Newark is counting on the federal government and state to bail them out from sea level rise and flooding.

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# Baylands Conservation Committee

**Byxbee Park & Measure E site.** Last winter financial information was released on the proposals for yard trimmings composting on the Measure E site. The least costly proposal was TWICE as expensive as exporting the yard trimmings to the GreenWaste digester in San Jose, so the Palo Alto Council rejected all the proposals. In July 2015, the City began collecting residential food scraps with yard trimmings and entered a 6 year agreement for GreenWaste to process these two organics streams. We hope that in November 2021 the City will rededicate the 10 acre Measure E site and restore the habitat corridor.

**Completion of Landfilling activities on Byxbee Park.** The City's current landfill permit expires on December 31, 2015 requiring landfilling activities to cease by then. Byxbee Park was dedicated as parkland in 1965 and on this 50th anniversary the full park may be opened to the public at last.

**Drones.** Menlo Park has been looking into regulating drones in Bedwell Park after increased complaints that companies have been testing drones there. The drone noise is very disruptive to both park users and wildlife, and there can be safety hazards if the operators are inexperienced. In Palo Alto, current FAA guidelines banning drones within 5 miles of any airport offer some protection for Byxbee Park.

**Ground Squirrels.** We're sad to report that CalRecycle, the State agency regulating landfills, required that ALL the ground squirrels on Byxbee Park be exterminated despite evidence that squirrels burrow horizontally and rarely burrow more than 4', not threatening the landfill cap. Ground squirrels are an essential part of the ecosystem supporting burrowing owls and they also are part of the baylands food chain.

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Photo courtesy of Carin High



Photo courtesy of Jerry Ting

*A special "Thank You" to Jerry Ting for sharing his incredible photos of the Refuge and its inhabitants. Jerry is the perfect ambassador for the Refuge and Bay Area parklands. His love for the outdoors is evident in every photo he takes and his photos inspire others to venture out to experience the beauty of our open space areas. These pages cannot do justice to his body of work. If you would like to see more of his photos please visit: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/jerryting/>*

## South Bay Wetlands

During King Tides I have often visited the floating dock at the Refuge's Environmental Education Center in Alviso. I wonder in what year that dock will float above its attachment to the levee. Last January it appeared to be almost level with the attachment. The slough is so deep, nearby dabbling ducks decorate the branches of overhung trees, unable to forage until the tide recedes. There is so much out there to monitor and enjoy.

As usual, the last year has included many issues in the far South Bay that drew CCCR attention. Major projects included the final environmental review for the shoreline levee in Alviso and the Phase 2 draft planning in the Alviso and Mountain View areas under the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project. While these plans continue to need attention, new projects emerged, along with keeping an eye on rising tides. San Jose is considering a large, 4-story hotel alongside Alviso Slough tidal wetlands and

the Refuge. The Water District and the City of Sunnyvale are planning expansion of purification of treated water, actions we support but with concern about disposal of the concentrated brine byproduct into the Bay. Mountain View wants to add high density housing north of Bayshore, an area which it previously designated to be wildlife-friendly. Eyes need also be alert to initiation of development on lands around the San Jose/Santa Clara water treatment plant in Alviso.

Unlike the depth of CCCR's Newark area team (for which we are most grateful), our Santa Clara County ranks are thin. Think you might join our ranks? Let's talk!

Eileen McLaughlin  
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# The Uneasy Chair



In the last issue I described how we acquired the Caruff property and Mayhews Landing for the refuge. The story of Bair Island is especially exciting because it was the goal of the entire Bay Area environmental community and it required some creative planning.

The Friends of Redwood City by referendum stopped a huge Mobil Land development that would have destroyed the entire island. (This remarkable event is described in the tribute to Ralph Nobles in this newsletter).

That was in 1982 and it was in 1985 that Rick Epstien, sitting at our dining room table one evening talking about Charleston Slough, turned the subject to Bair Island and said, "Those people saved Bair Island from that big development; why don't we get it into the Refuge, so it can't ever be developed? And while we're at it, why not get all the wetlands we have left into the refuge?"

This how the Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge was born. We went to Mr. Edwards, whose legislation authorized the expansion bill through Congress in 1988. The mapping that followed was done by all the available experts in the region. Their borders for the Refuge included Bair Island, as we had expected.

The Fish and Wildlife Service made it known to the owner that

*Editor's notes:*

*Thank you to our many contributing writers including Sandra Cooperman and Arthur Feinstein.*

*I'd like to extend a huge "Thank you!!" to my proof-readers and volunteer editors - Sam and Howard High and Gail Raabe.*

*And a special "Thank you!" to Jerry Ting for generously sharing his incredible photos.*

*All other photos unless noted otherwise are courtesy of Carin High.*

~~ Carin High, Editor

the land was considered vital to the biological restoration of the bay. Nothing came of those overtures, but the seeds were planted.

Forty organizations around the Bay, both civic and environmental, signed on at once to our goals. That is when the entire environmental community set the acquisition of Bair Island as its priority.

It was a couple of years later that Shell Oil gave Audubon Societies several thousand dollars as mitigation for a spill in the North Bay. This is where things got interesting because the Audubon Societies, with the impetus of Arthur Feinstein, hired a publicist Bill Rukeyser. He produced a one-page ad for the New York Times Western Edition—a beautiful production with a map of Bair Island, a photograph of the owner, Mr. Kumagai Taichiro, and a plea to "Please let Bair Island go back to nature." Our relationship with Japanese wetland activist groups led to including their names to the ad in the Times.

It was three weeks later that Mr. Kumagai's lawyer called the Fish and Wildlife Service and said, "Can we talk?"

Next on stage was Audrey Rust of Peninsula Open Space Trust, holding 15 million borrowed dollars in hand. It was accepted. And that is what can happen when we all pull together and the cause is just.

Several beloved friends and family have been my eyes and fingers this year—Betsy Matthews, Gwen and David Jeong, Jean Olmsted, Ginny White and Eileen McLaughlin. Thanks for all who read this for your warmth and your kindness and support.



Florence LaRiviere



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# Save Wetlands!

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Photo courtesy of Jerry Ting



***Save Wetlands*** is the annual Newsletter of the Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge, an all-volunteer nonprofit public benefit corporation.

*The mission of the Committee is to save the Bay's remaining wetlands by working to place them under the protection of the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, and to foster worldwide education regarding the value of all wetlands.*

*Support is welcome from anyone interested in saving wetlands, and a tax-deductible contribution of \$10 per issue would be appreciated.*

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