



# The Watch

Newsletter of the Watsonville Wetlands Watch  
Winter 2009

## Homage to Our Sloughs

This year the Watch participated in the Pajaro Valley Arts Council Gallery's *Mi Casa es Tu Casa* art exhibit, on display through December 6<sup>th</sup>. The theme was inspired by *Dia de Los Muertos* and showcases the rich art and tradition of altar-making. The altar is an invitation to appreciate the nature and the spirit of our precious local treasure – the wetlands of Watsonville. Many thanks to volunteer altar-builders Cathy Gamble, Bob Lyons, Virginia Taylor and Bill Best.

Through the vision and hard work of this very creative team of volunteers, the altar, *The Rebirth of the Wetlands*, was built. The intention was to combine the natural features of our local wetland habitats (birds like the red-tailed hawk and white pelican and native plants like rushes and cattails) with traditional Day of the Dead altar components such as the arch, brightly colored flowers, and representatives of the four elements (candles for fire, birds for air, rocks for earth, and glass for water).

While it was a true collaboration, each volunteer contributed his/her own special skills. Bob Lyons built the sturdy infrastructure, Bill Best

tackled the arch engineering, Cathy Gamble made the wonderful stained glass birds and water pieces, and Virginia Taylor added the color through flowers and tissue paper.

To draw attention to the importance of young people's involvement in the wetlands, we placed student art works on the outside of the left panel, including two "Found Art" pieces created by students after a slough cleanup session and a student's poem.



## WATCH WINS BLUE RIBBON

Watsonville Wetlands Watch recently won a blue ribbon at the Santa Cruz County Fair and a \$350 prize to further our work! Not bad for our first fair entry! Many thanks to Bruce Arthur, Bill Best, Bridget Dumas, Dave and Priscilla Partridge, Virginia Taylor, Alice Weigel, and Linda Youmans who constructed the display, showing a "mini-wetland", complete with native plants and red-tailed hawk.

# BACK TO SCHOOL BRUNCH

This event, held in early October, featured our video, which gives supporters a close-up view of WWW activities and encourages them to make a five-year commitment of financial support. This year's speaker was Mark Silberstein, Executive Director of the Elkhorn Slough Foundation. Silberstein lauded the Watch for our grassroots advocacy, focus on the wetlands, and the quality of our environmental education and restoration programs. He then made his own pledge of support, earning him entry into WWW's special group of "Northern Harriers". To learn more about the pledge program and the benefits of becoming a Northern Harrier, contact Genie Dee at 728-1156, ext. 7, or [genie@watsonvillewetlandswatch.org](mailto:genie@watsonvillewetlandswatch.org).



## TEAM EFFORT GARNERS GRANTS

WWW continues to have success in obtaining grants for our work. Most recently, we were notified we will be receiving a grant of \$13,000 from the National Fish and Wildlife Federation and a grant of \$37,500 from a joint application with the Monterey Bay Aquarium to the Stewardship Council, to support the Wetlands Biodiversity Monitoring Program.

## Wetland Stewards Search the Heavens

October 16<sup>th</sup> was a moonless night, perfect for looking at the stars. Wetland Stewards Rudy Zauata, Miguel Ruan, and Fernando Paniagua, along with their teacher, Cara Sundell, spent the night at the Genie Dee-Ron Morin home in the Santa Cruz mountains. Each steward picked a favorite constellation and then Genie gave them clues for locating the stars in the sky. The boys also learned to use a GPS-based star-finding device, which they pronounced "Cool!" In the morning, they learned to make French toast. All decided they want to learn more about the stars and the solar system!



## DOCENTS LEARN OF CHANGING SLOUGHS



On November 11th, docents were treated to a special talk by Kevin Fisher, wetland hydrologist and docent, on “Changing Sloughs”. A full house listened to a comparison of how the sloughs of today differ from the sloughs of the past, and gained insights on the future of the sloughs. If you’re interested in becoming a docent, see below.....

## 2010 DOCENT TRAINING PROGRAM BEGINS FEB. 24<sup>TH</sup>

Be a part of this community-wide program that protects, restores, and informs people about the Watsonville Wetlands!

Docents trainees will be treated to an inside look at the Pajaro Valley and its wide network of wetlands. Local experts will share the ecology, history and restoration of the wetlands during this 7-week program, which includes Wednesday evening presentations and Saturday morning field trips.

After training, docents give four hours a month with some combination of assisting with student field trips, leading tours on Watsonville’s wetland trails, participating in hands-on restoration projects, hosting and planning special

events, working in the greenhouse or the Native Plant Demonstration Garden, acting as host of the WERC or helping in the library, and working on special projects, like creating interpretive tools or doing research.

Benefits of becoming a docent are a copy of our award-winning book, *Watching the Watsonville Wetlands*, frequent enrichment opportunities, increased knowledge of local wetlands ecology and history, interpretation skills, and a host of new friends!

## RAISING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDS



Contributions to Watsonville Wetlands Watch support our work to protect, restore, and foster appreciation of the wetlands. You can support our year-end appeal by returning the enclosed envelope with your donation. Your contribution is tax-deductible in accordance with IRS rules for non-profit organizations and is very much appreciated.

# DOCENT EXTRAORDINAIRE STEVE ZASLAW



Steve is our webmaster/electronic communications specialist. All trends point to increased usage of electronic media, and Steve is our go-to guy for this. Steve played a key role in the upgrade of our website last fall, has researched and linked us with

Constant Contact, our e-mail service to supporters, and each month puts our e-letter into the CC format, so it is attractive to readers. Steve has also spent many hours researching and testing a variety of software tools for our online timesheet project.

Steve put his science skills to use for us in 2007 when he developed a protocol and training materials for water quality testing for the Cycles of Restoration field trips. In the photo above, he is helping students with this process.

Zaslav was born on the day that General Anthony McAuliffe, the army general at Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge, gave his one-word reply to a German surrender ultimatum: "Nuts!" This was Steve's reply when asked about his background and is typical of his Woody Allen-like sense of humor.

Steve was born in Manhattan and went to High School on, Long Island, and to Cornell University for his BS in Physics in 1967. Eventually, he worked in the computer industry and for a large computer manufacturer from 1977 until 2002, during which, he earned an MS in Computer Science at Boston University. Steve enjoyed visits to his sister in the Bay Area for years, so he moved to Capitola when he retired.

Lou and Joan Rose "dragged" a reluctant

Steve to the first few classes of docent training in 2007. When asked why he continued to participate, he said, "because the Roses are driving". Nonetheless, Steve was hooked and has gone on to become one of our most active docents.

Besides working for us, Steve is active in Life Long Learners where he is a board member, webmaster and publisher of their newsletter. He stays fit by swimming and walking on the beach near his home in Capitola.

Steve remains dedicated because of the value of our educational programs. He thinks that raising students' awareness about the environment is the only hope of saving the natural world, and heartily approves of our outdoor lab concept, "because kids remember catching a frog. It gives them an experience in the real world, which is more effective than textbook learning."

We are very happy to have Steve on our docent team. Thank you so much, Steve, for your outstanding dedication and contribution to Watsonville Wetlands Watch!

# Flood Control a Hot Topic

Bob Culbertson, WWW President, Jim Van Houten, Committee Chair, and other members of the Planning and Conservation Committee have been actively following the status of the Pajaro River Flood Control Project. There is a wide range of both costs and impacts being considered, and the Watch wants to be sure there is adequate public input. Bob sent a letter to the County Board of Supervisors on behalf of the Watch, requesting “continued transparency with respect to the current stage of the planning process and continued public involvement as proposed alternatives are moved forward”. To learn more about this project, contact Bob at 724-0860.



## Teachers Learn Project-Based Science



On November 7th, 16 middle and high school teachers from all over the Bay Area attended a Project-based Science Institute at the WERC. The teachers are learning to implement outdoor projects related to Project Tierra , WWW’s citizen science biodiversity monitoring project, with the support of the Watch and Monterey Bay Aquarium (MBA).

Healthy freshwater wetlands are home to many interconnected organisms. Aquatic invertebrates make up the foundation of this delicate food web and are indicators of wetland health. Here we see teachers learning to sample aquatic invertebrates in West

Struve Slough; they then returned to the WERC to identify their species and interpret their data. Two teachers will return with their students to participate in further monitoring this winter.

# Calendar

## January 2010

Saturday, Jan 23rd: 9 a.m. – noon. Restoration Saturday. We invite you to help restore wetland habitat on the fourth Saturday every month. The work includes planting native plants, removing exotic invasive plants, and helping in our native plant greenhouse.

We meet at the Fitz WERC located at the top of the Pajaro Valley High School campus (500 Harkins Slough Rd) at 9 a.m. Please bring water, and wear layered work clothes, sturdy shoes and a sun hat. We will provide tools, gloves and a snack. Map/directions. Afterwards we will go on a nature walk and also take a look at our freshly grazed areas. Contact Mary for more information at 831-566-4938.

## February, 2010

**Wednesday, Feb. 24th** Docent Training Begins. More information here or call volunteer coordination Kathy Fieberling, 831-345-1226.

**Saturday, Feb. 27th**, 9 a.m. – noon. Restoration Saturday. We invite you to help restore wetland habitat on the fourth Saturday every month. The work includes planting native plants, removing exotic invasive plants, and helping in our native plant greenhouse.

We meet at the Fitz WERC located at the top of the Pajaro Valley High School campus (500 Harkins Slough Rd) at 9 a.m. Please bring water, and wear layered work clothes, sturdy shoes and a sun hat. We will provide tools, gloves and a snack. Map/directions. Afterwards we will go on a nature walk and also take a look at our freshly grazed areas. Contact Mary for more information at 831-566-4938 or [mary@watsonvillewetlandswatch.org](mailto:mary@watsonvillewetlandswatch.org)



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