

## The Watch — Summer 2009

### Do They Really Have Red Legs?

by Kris Beall, Executive Director

A rapt audience learned about the mating “thumb” of the California Red-Legged frog along with other fascinating information about this tiny, important species “holding on” in our Watsonville sloughs.



Dawn Reis, biologist and local expert on California Red-legged frogs, presented fascinating information about the red-legged frog to a standing-room-only crowd at WWW’s community lecture series held at the Fitz WERC (Wetlands Educational Resource Center) in January. Red-legged frogs are now gone from the Central Valley and from the Sierras, thus their existence in the Watsonville slough watershed makes them all the more important to protect.

Dawn described the five most common species of frogs in Santa Cruz County: the red-legged frog, the western toad, the tree frog, the bullfrog, and the foothill yellow-legged frog, which only lives in Soquel Creek. With the aid of recordings, she helped us identify different frog sounds, from the loud, high pitched trill of the tiny tree frog to the low, rumbling bass of the bullfrog.

The habitat needs of frogs include ponds, streams, and upland habitat, which makes the restoration work of Watsonville Wetlands Watch crucial to this species. Frogs need different habitats for different stages of their lives: tadpoles and eggs need still, warmish shallow water, while adults need the ability to move to upland habitats and to hide, feed, and breed in deep water.

The red-legged frog is a threatened species which means it is likely to become endangered. There are many reasons for this: habitat removal, stream degradation and divisions, non native predators, farming and hunting activities, collectors, and disease. Dawn discussed the different diseases that affect the frogs; our community can help stem the spread of disease by disinfecting boots and shoes when moving from one watershed to another. Another support to the species is to not use herbicides and pesticides which contribute to their decline.

### Message from the Executive Director Kris Beall

With the generous support of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, we have been able to launch the Wetlands Biodiversity Monitoring Program, an exciting endeavor that will benefit our students and community as we learn about how our restoration efforts are making a difference to the wildlife and plant life of the wetlands. You can read more about this exciting program in the article on grant awards.

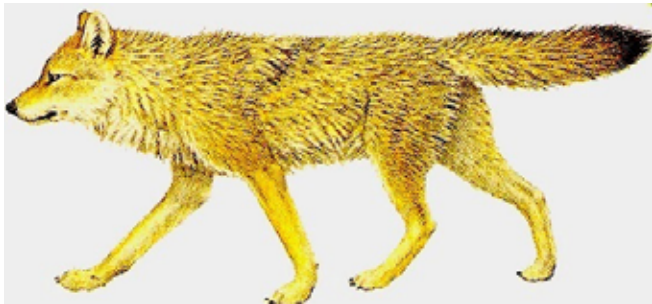


As you read about our Wetland Stewards program, our docent activities and training, and some of the special events we offer, you will see that whether the stock market is up or down, Watsonville Wetlands Watch continues to bloom with new ideas, strong support, and amazing programs designed to educate, appreciate, and restore the wetlands of the Pajaro Valley. Thank you for your continued support of our programs. I look forward to seeing you at our next activity, the June 25<sup>th</sup> lecture!

## Wetlands Lectures Attract Large Audiences

We have been excited by the enthusiastic attendance at our Wetlands Lecture Series this past year. These lectures bring in experts to speak on wildlife, history, flora, fauna and topics that relate to the freshwater wetlands of Pajaro Valley. In February we learned mountain lion biology and behavior from Bruce Elliott, wildlife expert and teacher. At that time there had been several mountain lion sightings in the hills of Watsonville and even in Seascape!

In April, Dawn Reis, California red-legged frog expert, helped us identify the sounds of varied frogs found in the wetlands and told us of the biology and habitat needs of the frog, a threatened and endangered species which is hanging on (metaphorically speaking) by its little feet in this wetland complex. We are partnering with the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County to identify and eventually restore one of the only known breeding ponds for the frog. Dawn also led a night out on the wetlands, with flashlights, searching for red-legged frogs. Alas, none were spotted, but the group of 12 learned a lot and had a lot of fun!



Bruce Elliott came back in May and provided expertise on foxes, wolves, coyotes and other canine family members. We regularly see fox and coyote in the Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas surrounding the Fitz WERC and now we know so much more about them.

On June 25<sup>th</sup>, Jeff Barnes, a photographer and nature interpreter, will share his knowledge of migratory birds

that stop in the Watsonville Wetlands on their way to the Arctic North. Please join us and spread the word to friends and neighbors who may be interested in these free, informative talks held at the Fitz WERC. You can check our website for details and sign up for upcoming lectures at <http://www.watsonvillewetlandswatch.org/>.



## Introducing Mary Paul, Restoration Specialist Extraordinaire

by Ann B. Jenkins, Volunteer

Ask Mary Paul what she hopes to be doing in 2012. Her answer: “I would like to still be doing exactly what I am doing now—working on some aspect of plant restoration out in the field.”

She is passionate about restoration and comes to her position as Restoration Specialist with a solid background via the Brooklyn Botanical Garden, and as an intern doing interpretive and education work at the Central Park Zoo. In 2005, she was accepted for an internship in wild land restoration jobs through the Student Conservation Association and the Bureau of Land Management at Fort Ord. She served as crew leader in the international project, “the Seeds of Success”. The goal of this worldwide program is to collect 10% of the world’s flora for seed storage. She also did a year-long internship with the botanist at Fort Ord. “I loved all the vernal ponds in the back country,” she said.



In 2006, she joined California State Parks, Monterey district, based in Marina, where she did restoration work as well as coordinating volunteer restoration events. She contributed to a research project, a study of the effects of prescribed burning on chaparral and manzanita.

She joined WWW in late 2008. “I was editing the Chuck Haugen Conservation Fund Calendar of Events, and I kept reading about WWW events. “I should make it out there one of these days,” she said to herself, She attended the picnic at the Fish and Game reserve and discovered we were hiring; she applied, and the rest is history.

Mary was born in New Delhi, and her family moved to Queens, New York, when she was four. She grew up in Queens, attended City College of New York, and majored in anthropology and education. She speaks Malayalam, an Indian language, and Spanish, and is also working on French in expectation of travels after attending an upcoming family wedding in Germany. “Hopefully, I will also pick up a little German....”



Mary Paul demonstrates planting techniques to San Juan School students on a restoration site at the Department of Fish & Game Ecological Reserve.

## Farewell to Catherine

by Ann B. Jenkins, Volunteer

Catherine Hatch, Assistant Superintendent of the PVUSD, played an integral part in the collaboration to build the Wetlands Educational Resource Center (WERC). Although others did the “lion’s share of negotiations” for the new high school, Catherine jumped in with both feet. “We were looking for curriculum,” she explained, pulling out a huge binder entitled “Wetlands Science” put together by some savvy high school science teachers.

As Catherine’s responsibilities for the new high school started to grow, she began to forge a partnership with Watsonville Wetlands Watch. “We began to work together to design and build a center to support the environmental focus of the new high school..... soon Watsonville Wetlands Watch, the City of Watsonville, and PVUSD were working together. One of the hardest things to do is to get three individual agencies to agree...on anything,” she laughed. “We just kept coming back to the table until the WERC jelled. Then intense fundraising became our focus. Each agency had a representative group at the meetings. We all became wonderful friends,” she remarked.



She insisted that the “naming committee” for the new high school take a field trip to view the school site. “It was just an empty beautiful hill. We walked to the crest of the hill and everyone gaped. There was a 360 degree view that took your breath away.....Most of us did not even know the wetlands were there.” Catherine faithfully sat through many meetings with the City of Watsonville and Wetlands Watch to plan the new high school, and then to fund the Fitz WERC. “Suddenly, it was time for the groundbreaking of the Fitz WERC and then..... it was opening day. It has been a wonderful partnership, everyone has worked together and we all have a group of lifelong friends to enjoy,” she added.

The Fitz WERC fit right in with the PVUSD mission “to create a generation of kids coming through who would be natural stewards of the environment. The environmental focus has to be real and something meaningful to them,” she explained. Many of the PVHS students through their connection with the Fitz WERC and as Wetlands Stewards have been able to mentor younger students.

Catherine admits that high school is her passion. Prior to her current position, she was a sought-after high school teacher, and a principal at Aptos and Renaissance high schools. “I met my husband when we were both teaching at North Monterey County High School.” Now that she’s retiring, what are her plans? “For a while, I will just enjoy ‘the space’,” she said. Then she and her husband will start enjoying their three favorite places, San Diego, Vancouver, BC, and Santa Cruz.

Good luck, Catherine, from all of us. Thank you for your dedication and unflagging commitment. You will be missed. Please come back and visit!

## New Maps on Our Website!

by Noëlle Antolin, Education Director, with Lou Rose & Steve Zaslaw

Over the last several months WWW board member Lou Rose and volunteer webmaster and docent Steve Zaslaw have been working with staff from the City of Watsonville's GIS department to create an up-to-date map of the Watsonville Wetlands. The new map features a beautiful aerial image of the wetlands as well as various points of interest like the Fitz WERC, trails, the Department of Fish and Game Reserve, Tarplant Hill, and the Nature Center at Ramsay Park. Two downloadable versions and one interactive version of the map are now available on our website. All maps label the six sloughs, hiking trails, and many other features.

The first version of the map is a [Quick Download PDF](#). It opens fast, provides an overview, and can be printed on an 8½ x 11 page.

The second version of the map is a [High Resolution PDF](#). It takes longer to open, at least 40 seconds with a high-speed internet connection ("broadband"), but it enables you to see and print areas that you select in greater detail than the "Quick Download" map.

In addition, Steve has created an interactive [3D version of this map](#) using Google Earth that enables the viewer to virtually traverse the landscape with the computer mouse! It's fun!

This map takes about 10 seconds to open with a broadband connection, but it's far more exciting because you can zoom in and out and pan and tilt in fantastic ways. The first time you use it, a browser plug-in will be automatically installed (if you say OK); once the plug-in is installed, whenever you visit the map you can use all of those functions. If you have a PC, this map works on Firefox V2 and newer and on Internet Explorer V6 and V7. If you have a Mac, this map works on Firefox V3 and on Safari V3.1 and newer. You won't be able to print this map, but it allows you to zoom in to see much greater detail than either of the PDF maps.

If you have questions or comments, call Steve at 831-465-9451.

## Wetland Stewards: Oh, what a year!

by Cara-Alexandra Sundell, Education Coordinator

When I am asked, "What have the Wetland Stewards done this year?" I am consistently amazed at the amount of work the high school stewards have accomplished. This past school year, we have served five middle school and elementary after-school groups. Rolling Hills, Pajaro, and E.A. Hall Middle Schools 6th, 7th, and 8th graders participated in lessons about compost, seed dispersal, wetland birds, pollination, and wetland wildlife, and contributed to restoration efforts. MacQuiddy Elementary 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders participated in lessons about soil, nature, art, sounds of the wetlands, and food webs.

The high school stewards mentored the students with pleasure and sometimes surprising eloquence. In the act of teaching, each steward started to develop a unique voice and many of them have overcome personal hurdles such as shyness, expressing their feelings to peers and students, and translating the activities into Spanish.

The visiting after-school students have also grown and developed. I have seen kids who appeared thoroughly uninterested in the local wetlands participating in activities with enthusiasm by the end of the year. One of the



more heartwarming incidents from this past semester was three kids from the Rolling Hills group appearing at the WERC door wanting to participate in more activities with the high school stewards - on a day when their group was not scheduled to come to the WERC; the kids had come of their own volition.

In addition to teaching wonderful local students about the wetlands, the high school stewards completed stewardship projects. The purpose of the projects is to allow each steward to explore a wetland topic of interest, then create a tangible item, such as a pamphlet, that can be disseminated into the high school community. The stewards became passionate about their projects and worked very hard on them. The completed projects include: pamphlets introducing the wetlands, on restoration, and the brown pelican; a bird chart; native plant coloring sheets for youngsters; a wetland public service announcement “commercial”; and a poem. Projects on paper were distributed at lunch and advisory at the high school by the stewards and the coloring pages were sent to the elementary students who participated in the program. The commercial is posted on You Tube; a link was sent to all PVHS teachers; it will be up on our website soon; and the steward who made the commercial is still trying to get it on community TV. The poem is published in this newsletter and was also read at a high school open mike.

As a celebration for the end of the school year and a thank you, we took all seven stewards camping the weekend of May 30th at Big Basin Redwoods State Park. The stewards were all very excited; only two of the stewards have been camping before and none have been to Big Basin. This is the 2nd year of the annual Wetland Stewards camping trip, and it will probably continue to be a favorite activity.



Students monitor plant populations on the Dept. of Fish & Game Ecological Reserve.

**Imprisoned Wings**  
**by Fernando Paniagua**

Mighty was its screech, its form of speech  
Sharp was its beak like a mountain's peak  
Red tailed hawk was only one, below that radiant sun  
With claws that grasped hope and grabbed prey  
Keen eyes that seek all ways  
Stronger than the wind it wandered with  
Never made it, a challenge with man and bullet

Delightful was its joyful song  
So much soul within little wings  
Day unfolds as the bird sings  
Song sparrow expresses life  
Beating heart same as us  
Same song different rhythm  
Listen closely and you will feel them  
Machines and destruction, tearing apart  
It broke the little fellow's heart

There stood a lonesome bird on a branch of solitude  
Mourning dove with sorrow entombed  
It mourned in the dimmest night, most pallid moon  
Who to blame for such melancholy tune?  
Who to blame for all the tears that bloom?  
For such beauty that's scarce and true  
Who to blame? But a man's sport and game  
Mourning dove feels heartache  
All lives are the same  
Who to blame? But the one with no name

Fernando Paniagua is a sophomore at Pajaro Valley High School in The Wetland Stewards program at the Fitz Wetland Educational Resource Center. Fernando told us that he "did this poem because the wetlands are really a beauty of life and are an inspiration."

## **Be a Watsonville Wetlands Watch Supporter and Help Protect our Wetlands!**

**Your contribution supports our work to protect, restore, and foster appreciation of the wetlands.**

To contribute via PayPal or by mailing a check, [click here](#).

For information about our pledge program, contact Genie Dee, Outreach and Development Director, at 728-1156, ext.7 or [by email](#).

### **Wetlands Alive! Tours**

#### **Free and Open to the Public.**

Experience the birds, plants, and wildlife of the Watsonville sloughs ... fun for the whole family! We'll supply binoculars.

Tours meet at 10 a.m. at the Fitz Wetlands Educational Resource Center, at the top of the campus of Pajaro Valley High School, 500 Harkins Slough Road, Watsonville, CA 95076; go to the last parking lot. [Map with driving directions](#).

Approximately 1 mile walk; long pants and tennis/walking shoes recommended. Allow one hour; non-walkers will be given a tour of the Fitz WERC.

Dates: July 11<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>; August 8<sup>th</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Reservations required 48 hours in advance; call 831-728-1156, ext. 7 or e-mail [Genie Dee](#).

### **Watsonville Wetlands Watch Awarded Key Program Grants**

by Genie Dee, Outreach and Development Director

In March Watsonville Wetlands Watch (WWW) was awarded two significant grants for environmental protection and education. First, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation awarded WWW a two-year, \$125,000 grant to design and begin the implementation of its new citizen-based Wetlands Biodiversity Monitoring Project.

The purpose of this project is to engage students and the broader community of the Pajaro Valley in the process of collecting and analyzing environmental data to monitor the success of WWW restoration projects and to investigate how they influence biodiversity in the Watsonville wetlands. The areas of focus will be monitoring of water quality, bird populations, aquatic invertebrates, and vegetation..

Community experts and volunteers will play an essential role in designing the monitoring protocols and leading groups through field data collection activities. They will also serve as links to the professional science community, giving students opportunities to become exposed to career options in the field of environmental conservation.



Over time, data will be made available to the local scientific and university communities as well as on an interactive website. The information will be used to track biological changes over time and provide input to management of WWW's restoration projects so we may continue to employ best management practices and further develop wetland restoration methods for the wetlands of the Pajaro Valley and the California coast.

If you are interested in getting involved in this exciting new program, contact Noëlle Antolin, Education Director, at 831-728-1156, Ext. 5.

Also in March, WWW was awarded \$15,000 from the Monterey Peninsula Foundation to fund the 2009 Math in the Wetlands Summer Program. This is a program designed to involve PVUSD middle school students in the wetlands while changing their perspective about the use of mathematics. Held at the Fitz Wetlands Educational Resource Center (the WERC), it gives students a hands-on perspective in the use of math in real life along with exposure to environmental science.

This program addresses two needs of the student population. First is the need of some students for additional math education. Second, students receive support from the docents who assist with the program. Students are able to experience a high ratio of supportive adults, teaching and coaching them to succeed in a subject area in which they have previously had limited success.

“Like many non-profits, Watsonville Wetlands Watch has found 2009 to be an extremely competitive and challenging year for grant funding,” says Kris Beall, WWW Executive Director. “We are very grateful to the Packard Foundation and the Monterey Peninsula Foundation for supporting these programs, which are so important in protecting the wetlands and encouraging environmental stewardship. While enhancing science and math education for students, they also increase environmental awareness for the entire community.”



Biologist John Pierce and students examine aquatic invertebrates from Harkins Slough.

## Watsonville Wetlands Watch Docent Class of 2009

by Kathy Fieberling, Volunteer Coordinator

The Watsonville Wetlands Watch Docent Class of 2009 graduated on April 2. We now have 18 new docents who are dedicated to our mission and are excited about being a part of our docent team. As usual, this class is full of outstanding people with diverse backgrounds and interests. We have 3 new young people, including middle school student Raymond Silver who is our youngest docent, and PVHS students Brenda Hermsillo and Leticia Orduño. We have also our first docents from Carmel Valley, Gabrielle Fladd and Jon West. Welcome to you all!



Pictured (left to right) in the back row are Brenda Hermsillo, Leticia Orduño, Raymond Silver, Valerie Stewart, Genie Dee, Nancy Scarborough, Nita Hertel, and Priscilla Partridge; seated are Marcia Burns, Sally Diggory, Kathy Fieberling, Stephanie Kirby, and Gabrielle Fladd. Missing from the picture are Virginia Taylor, Debbie Diersch, Jim Hagan, Jon West, Mary Paul, and Caroline Rodgers. Congratulations, docents!

## **Opportunities to Get Involved and Meet Others**

### **Talk: From Watsonville's Wetlands to the Arctic: Epic Journeys**

On June 25<sup>th</sup> Jeff Barnes speaks on migratory birds that stop in Watsonville's wetlands on their way to the Arctic North. [More information.](#)

### **WWW Annual Picnic**

July 19<sup>th</sup> is the date to save for the annual potluck picnic from noon to 2:30 p.m. Enjoy the beautiful setting overlooking the slough while sampling tasty dishes and connecting with fellow wetland supporters. [More information.](#)

### **Monterey Bay Birding Festival**

Volunteers are needed for September's Monterey Bay Birding Festival. [Learn more at their website.](#) If you would like to work a few or many hours, please call Dobie Jenkins, 722-4722.

### **Restoration Saturdays**

Restoration days are the fourth Saturday of every month; we meet at the Fitz WERC at 9 a.m. Volunteer days are dedicated to augmenting restoration projects or improving the garden and grounds of the Fitz WERC: mulching, light weeding, some planting of native shrubs, and caretaking of the WERC's landscape. We need all of the hands we can gather to make the projects thrive. Gloves, tools, and snacks will be provided. We'll work until noon, with time for birding over the sloughs. [More information.](#)

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