



News from Watsonville Wetlands Watch

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2018 World Wetlands Day Was a Huge Success



Volunteers get a lesson in tree planting from a local arborist as they prepare for planting

Our **9th annual World Wetlands Day celebration** was a huge success thanks to the over 250 volunteers who joined us and the City of Watsonville for a day of tree planting throughout Ramsay Park and the installation of a native plant demonstration garden around the City's Nature Center. In total 43 native and drought tolerant trees and hundreds of native plants were planted throughout the park, which is no small feat! Once again this year, the Alma de Mexico youth mariachi band roamed throughout the park serenading volunteers as they planted. There were free educational games and booths encircling the Nature Center along with refreshments and prizes for all.

World Wetlands Day is an international day of action in recognition of the vital role that wetlands serve throughout the world. It commemorates the signing of the 1971 United Nations Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

This project was the kick-off event for our the **Watsonville Urban Forest Revitalization Project**, for which we recently received a grant from the California Department of Forestry

and Fire Protection and the California Climate Investment Carbon Off-set Program in partnership with the City of Watsonville. This funding source is designed to ameliorate the impacts of climate change throughout the State. Over the next two years we will be partnering with the City and other community partners to install a total of 300 new trees and hundreds of native plants on 10 park sites and 3 street corridors throughout Watsonville. We'll also be hosting many public volunteer events, school field trips, and job training programs for Watsonville youth.

It's an exciting new project that will improve water quality in the Watsonville wetlands and the Monterey Bay, improve Watsonville's air quality, streets, parks and trails for bicycling, walking and recreation, enhance native habitat throughout the City and sequester tons (literally!) of carbon from the atmosphere as the trees grow and mature.

A Look Back at 2017 - A Message From Our New Board President

Happy New Year to all Watsonville Wetlands Watch volunteers, partners and other friends! 2018 looks to be an exciting year already. But before leaving 2017, let's pause a moment to look at just four of the 2017 successes:

- WWW presented six superlative community education talks to maximum capacity audiences,
- WWW convened fourteen Saturday Community Restoration days attended by more than 600 community members,
- WWW led ten walks/tours, ranging in focus from native traditions to photography, for over 180 participants,
- WWW surpassed 2016 by over 700 additional local students who received outdoor and hands-on environmental education experiences in the Watsonville wetlands.



Board President Chris Johnson-Lyons

January showed no indication of a lapse in this tempo. For example, did you make it to the January 23rd photo presentation by Seraphina Landgrebe, "*Ospreys of Harkins Slough*"? She so beautifully took us into the wonders of one amazing bird species living in our local wetlands. I hear that she may honor us again with this presentation.

These and other accomplishments wouldn't occur without WWW's impressive volunteers, community partners and supporters. Thank you for your outstanding participation and contributions with our school programs, restoration, and community outreach services. I look forward to working with you. - *Chris Johnson-Lyons*

Introducing Our New Environmental Educator



Chris Edwards

Please join us in welcoming our new Environmental Educator Chris Edwards! Born in the US Virgin Islands, he was brought up in Santa Cruz and San Jose in an outdoorsy, nature loving family, whom he credits with inspiring his love for the environment.

Chris holds a degree in environmental studies from the University of California Santa Cruz and has previously worked for Naturalists at Large where he acted as an instructor, leading rock climbing trips and high ropes course adventures. He has also worked as an educator for Santa Cruz County Outdoor Science School here in Watsonville. Additionally, he is currently a guide and instructor at University of California at San Francisco Outdoor Programs where he leads backpacking trips. When not working as an educator, Chris can be found on the Disc Golf course - he is a sponsored player, and is ranked top 50 in the world!

Wetland Stewards Corner





From the left: Wetland Stewards Jesus, Karen and Nissa

This month we are starting a new series in which we will highlight a few of the Pajaro Valley High School students participating in our Wetland Stewards program. Each month we'll focus on a different group of students so you will get a snapshot into the special cohort in our Stewards program.

Jesus joined Wetland Stewards because his sister was a part of the program last year and told him what a transformative experience she had. He even hopes to continue the legacy by inspiring his younger brother to join next year. Jesus is grateful for the skills he has gained in public speaking, communications and leadership and hopes to translate that into his next steps toward college after high school.

Karen is no stranger to protecting lands in Watsonville as she came to the Wetland Stewards program after spending a year in the Monterey Aquarium's WATCH program. While she plans to pursue a career in nursing, she feels that her time working to preserve local habitats has inspired her to always be an active member of her community.

Nissa joined Wetland Stewards because she feels passionate about youth education and the environment. She believes that kids need to be informed about how they can make a difference at a young age. She hopes to become a trauma surgeon in the future and greatly values the skills she has gained in multitasking and leadership as a mentor in the Wetland Stewards program.

Be sure to say hi to these amazing young people when you see them!

Noelle Antolin Joins the Board of Directors



We are pleased to announce that Noelle Antolin, prior Director of Education Programs, has joined our Board of Directors.

Noelle was first introduced to WWW during an internship while pursuing an MS degree at San Jose State University in Grassland Ecology. Her intern project focused on coastal prairie monitoring on the Department of Fish and Wildlife property that borders West Struve Slough.



Noelle Antolin

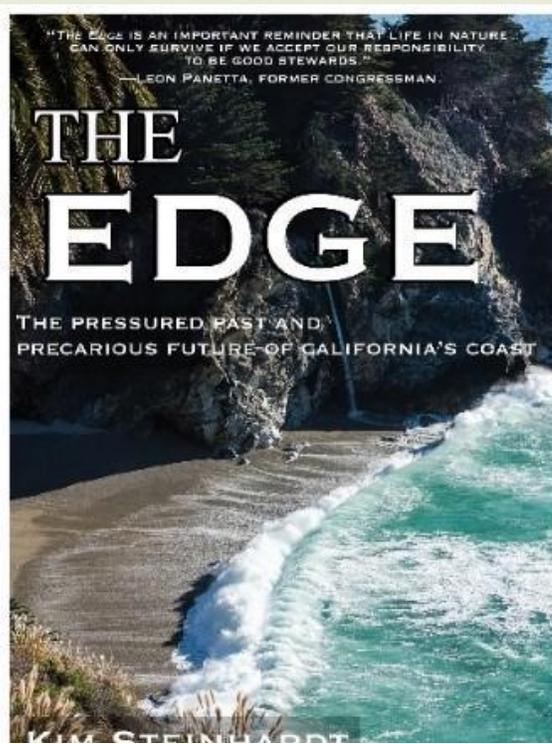
After graduating she became our Director of Education Programs from 2007 to 2015. Noelle was impressed by the passion shown by students, docents & volunteers, staff, and Board members with the mission of the organization and its positive impact on the community. Watching the Wetland Stewards grow and become environmental stewards were truly her biggest inspiration.

More recently Noelle has been focusing on her family business in downtown Santa Cruz. She has been successful in bringing her experience in community organizing to the restaurant world by coordinating fundraisers for local non-profits and other community gatherings.

Of her new position on the Board, Noelle says: *"I am excited to get back involved with WWW to support a very talented and passionate group of people doing important community work in South Santa Cruz County. I hope to help bring in additional resources to support WWW programs, build relationships with local businesses, and help support our programs so that they continue to grow and flourish."*

Please join us in welcoming Noelle to the Board!

Speakers Series: Living on the Edge



Please join us on **Wednesday, March 14, 2018**, for an evening with **Kim Steinhart** who will present his dramatic photo journey exploring the California coast's past, present, and probable future. Kim will share some legal, environmental, historical, and colorful personal insights, including an update on the sea otter survival story. He will discuss the issues in his new book: *The Edge: The Pressured Past and Precarious Future of California's Coast*, co-authored with noted local coastal science expert Gary Griggs.

Kim is a former Administrative Law Judge, now marine wildlife photographer and writer who is currently working with National Geographic Books for release next year of a collection of his sea otter photographs and coastal storytelling.

"The Edge is an important reminder that life in nature can only survive if we accept our responsibility to be good stewards." - Leon Panetta, former Congressman

This talk is from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the Fitz



This talk is from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the Fitz Wetlands Educational Resource Center [Click for map/directions.](#)

Admission is free but you must reserve a seat online by [clicking here.](#)

For more information email ria@watsonvillewetlandswatch.org.

The Amazing Osprey



Ospreys fighting in mid-air. Photo by Seraphina Landgrebe

For any of you who didn't get a chance to come to our lovely talk on the *Ospreys of Harkins Slough* presentation last month, we have included some information about these majestic birds for you.

Ospreys are extremely widely distributed and are found on 6 out of the 7 continents. They migrate every year, from Canada to South America, Europe to sub-Saharan Africa or around Oceania. They mate for life and add to their nests year after year. Some nests even grow to such enormity that a human could comfortably sit inside them. Their diet consists 99% of fish, making the sloughs a beneficial place to call home.

Fun fact: Ospreys possess specifically adapted talons for their seafood diet - their talons are reversible, allowing them to grasp fish from both sides, with 2 toes in front and 2 behind.

Because *The Ospreys of Harkins Slough* presentation was so popular, Seraphina has graciously agreed to present it again this year. Details will be forthcoming in a future edition of the newsletter so please stay tuned.

You Did It!



Thanks to you, our very generous supporters, we had our most successful year-end fundraising campaign ever! Our challenge match totaling \$33,300 was the largest in our history and your gifts not only met it, but exceeded it!

It is an exciting time for Watsonville Wetlands Watch. Thanks to your support, we are making real and lasting change in creative and innovative ways. We hold strong to a vision of community centered conservation where our environment is celebrated as central to community well-being. But it takes a community



community well-being. But it takes a community working together to make this type of impact and we couldn't do it without you!

We are grateful to everyone who contributed to the challenge match and who helped us to exceed it!

We are honored that you have entrusted us with the means to continue to support our organization, the wetlands, and the community we all love! As we move into 2018, we look forward to sharing many wonderful activities

with you and saying thank you in person.

Special thanks to Diane Cooley, Pat Fitz, Laura Hofmeister, Ann and Dobie Jenkins, Amy Newell, Rich Palm, Pat and Rowland Rebele, Caroline Rodgers, Joan and Lou Rose, Robert Stephens, Jean and Jerry Thomas, and Alice Weigel for being our challenge match grantors and inspiring the giving spirit in all of us.

Thank You!

Watsonville Wetlands Watch advocates for wetland issues, educates elementary, middle, and high school students, restores degraded habitats, preserves what remains whole, and teaches appreciation for the unique beauty and life of the Pajaro Valley wetlands. In cooperation with numerous other agencies, we support studies of and planning for these sites.

Watsonville Wetlands Watch is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, federal tax i.d. #77-0519882.