



The Watch

Newsletter of the Watsonville Wetlands Watch
Spring 2006

Slough Niche: Birding the Sloughs

I parked my pick-up at the reserve corner and got out. It was late afternoon in October and the sun's oblique rays ricocheted across grassy fields and row crops, highlighting western aspects with chartreuse fire. The hills dove and swooped together like the wakes of goldfinches, at once evocative of a child's drawing and infinitely more refined.

I was waiting for a flock of teachers but may as well have beckoned will-o'-the-wisps, because grades were due (as usual) and wheels were turning towards hot desk lamps and foreshortened hours of rest. Only the redoubtable Gary M—, swung up at the appointed hour, emerging with ineradicable smile warm as the weather.

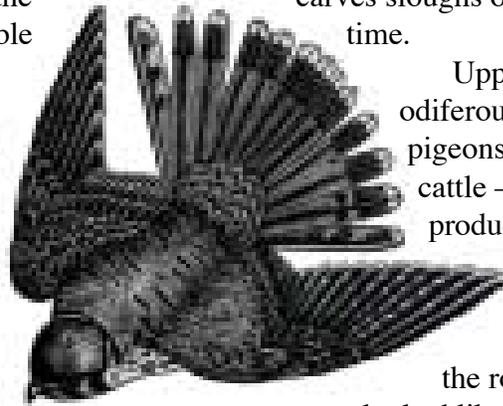
We saluted our lost comrades, exulted in the radiant conditions and watched as several "V's" of Canada geese emerged from Harkins slough and honked grandly towards the lake district. Strings of cormorants at the same altitude and bearing sped past in the distance, their frenetic pace — genetic legacy of long pelagic foraging trips — excessive for the short flight inland.

A large raptor profiled over the old Cardoza Ranch, prompting us to quickly raise our glasses. Not long before, Gary had introduced a field biology class here to a golden eagle: he was primed for another sighting. You'll notch eagles perhaps 5-10 percent of the time in the sloughs — a number that has tapered with the reduction of ground squirrel colonies. Our bird turned out to be a large female red-tail, little more than half the size of a golden eagle.

I remembered the winter of 2004, when a pair of eagles courted around the tall eucalyptus trees in upper Harkins, arresting passers-by with spectacular "crop-dusting" displays. But that was the same winter that Home Depot relocated part of the Struve Slough watershed to a Harkins side-canyon, and the eagles

demurred from nesting. Too bad: once a nest site is established, eagles will return year after year.

I showed Gary the deep curtain drain that was dug to shunt water around the farmland just below the high school's playing fields. The drain may lower groundwater tables enough to help drain the playing fields, which were built without their own drains of their own over a seep spring once frequented by shorebirds and herons. The seep, still there, once fed a swale that runs down to the east dogleg of Hansen Slough. The school and the curtain drain both disrupt, if perhaps only temporally, the wet-area erosion that carves sloughs out of the hillsides over geologic time.



Upper Hansen Slough — once an odiferous feedlot that sustained more pigeons and ground squirrels than cattle — we found now devoted to the production of Jalapeno peppers. The ploughing had forced the ground squirrels and meadow voles into the road margins; the road cuts over Harkins Slough looked like Swiss cheese. We even saw the brown glimmer of a vole or two.

You could hardly keep track of the white-tailed kites, so numerous where they. Gary felt confident that we had tallied a dozen or fifteen; I thought the number more at 7-10. A good number, either way — a number that served as a coefficient for 15-30 semi-translucent, black-shouldered wings organizing the balmy afternoon air into tight eddies and smooth slipstreams. When the voles thin, the kites will float over the hills to the east to search for new pockets of ore.

Searching the cleared ground for seeds and sprouts, white- and golden-crowned sparrows and California towhees sputtered into the hedgerows as we sauntered by, gliding back on quiet wings when the disturbance passed.

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation Funds Community Restoration Project in West Struve Slough

In Watsonville Wetlands Watch, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has found a perfect partner for not your ordinary habitat restoration project. The West Struve Slough Community Restoration Project continues the community driven effort to protect West Branch Struve Slough and restore the 120-acre Watsonville Ecological Reserve located across the street from Watsonville's new environmental High School.

Led by the stewarding hands of Pajaro Valley students, neighbors, and restorationists, four acres of the reserve are being planted with native plants and monitored for water quality, wildlife populations, and ecological health. The main focus of the project is the creation of a grassed waterway and filter strip at the base of the High School, an innovation in native plant technology. The grassed waterway will be one acre in size and will be fully restored with native grasses, rushes, and sedges - all functioning to control erosion and pollution from the High School. All of the new plants introduced into the reserve will have been grown from locally collected seed and grown by students at Amesti Elementary, Pajaro Val-

ley High School and at local native plant nurseries.

Our Fall field trips were a great success and we are excited for more field trips and community involvement in the Spring and Summer. In addition to school groups, we are working with local job training programs and will be holding four workshops over the coming year on water quality, the cultural uses of native plants, invasive species removal, and career opportunities in restoration and the sciences. We'll also continue our bi-weekly community restoration days on the second and fourth Saturday of each month. We're still open to more schools and community groups interested in participating in field trips and wetlands education and we're always looking for volunteers interested in helping with restoration and our many school visits.

The Watsonville Ecological Reserve is returning to a native and balanced ecology, and it continues to be an outdoor classroom, a field of study, and a place where the community can come to learn from and appreciate the deeply valuable natural environment that lies beneath our town.

– Jonathan Pilch

NICHE continued



Down in Harkins Slough, we were rewarded for our devotions with the sight of several scarlet-eyed, cinnamon-splashed teal dabbling in the shallows below the crossing. There were grebes and coots, cormorants and gulls, egrets great and small and a blue heron or two. In this once small puddle-cum-lake sailed a group of white pelicans, their great orange beaks pulled up snug against curved, swan-like necks. We reflected on other warm, fall afternoons like this when flocks of white pelicans spread white-and-black, eagle-sized wings in magnificent gyres over the site of the high school.

Back on the terrace, a kestrel devoured a vole that must have once weighed almost as much as itself – a tribute to the strength of the modest talons gripping the carnage to the wire. The bird hardly looked at us as it tore at the flesh, pausing only to shift down the wire as we neared.

A bit further, over the crest of the hill, a smaller kestrel ripped up another rodent, a mousy tail just visible beneath the busy beak in the waning light. Nearby, an uncommon loggerhead shrike, neither mouse nor cricket gracing its tenterhooks, watched hungrily after its bedtime.

When we returned to our corner, Gary was exuberant – an energy state only slightly higher than his resting phase. “Kestrels eating voles, fifteen kites, white pelicans ...”

“A loggerhead shrike ...” I chimed in.

“A loggerhead shrike, cinnamon teal ... those teachers don't know what they're missing – but I'm going to tell 'em,” he reveled.

“You can see a lot, just walking along the road,” I concurred. Grades and dinners to prepare notwithstanding, we felt eons ahead of the game.

– Jerry Busch

Patrick J. Fitz WERC Open House Scheduled for March 18



It's official! On Saturday, March 18th, the Patrick J. Fitz Wetlands Educational Resource Center will celebrate its grand opening with a public open house from noon to 4:00 p.m. Come share in our excitement as you tour the K.

and M. Samis Wetlands Lab donated by Pondsaway, Inc., the Chuck and Ramona Allen Visitor Center, the Ruth Hofmeister Memorial Greenhouse, and the outdoor classroom featuring a breathtaking view of the sloughs and central Monterey Bay coastline.

At our open house we'll unveil the new "teaching wall" in the Visitor Center - a state of the art display of the Watsonville wetlands designed by Wildways, Inc. featuring detailed depictions of wetland flora and fauna. The display includes a key in English, Spanish, and Latin, as well as the following in-depth glimpses of our own Watsonville sloughs:

- "Hidden in the Grass" - an exploration of the coastal prairie ecosystem
- "Mating in the Marsh" - a look at wetland courting rituals
- "Against all Odds, New Generations Thrive" - birth and development of wetland fauna
- "In Nature's Cafeteria, Everybody is on the Menu" - a look at the wetland food web
- "Murder in the Meadow" - a nocturnal view of the wetlands

In the "Shaping our Wetland Environment" temporary exhibit, we explore the theme of human interaction with the wetlands through ecological restoration and good stewardship. A unique plant exhibit features key native species and "worst of the worst" non-native species found in the Watsonville wetlands and coastal prairie ecosystems. Our "Wetland Stewards" display showcases four local heroes who have given countless hours of their own time to protect, restore, and appreciate our wetland environment.

In the Samis Wetlands Lab and Classroom, we will feature student work funded by a Bay Watershed Education and Training (BWET) grant from the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, as well as student artwork from throughout Pajaro Valley Uni-

Spring 2006

fied School District. Come take a look at our state-of-the-art computer lab featuring the latest GIS software, donated by the Pajaro Dunes Homeowners' Association and networked by Wetlands Watch volunteer Henry Robinson from Friends of Pajaro Dunes.

Finally, come experience the beginnings of the new Ruth Hofmeister Memorial Greenhouse, where we will be propagating native plants for our National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant. Restoration Specialist Jonathan Pilch and Wetland Steward John Pritchard will be on hand to provide information on the plants we are growing and opportunities to get involved with our volunteer restoration program.

We look forward to seeing you for this landmark celebration!

— Rachel Garrett



Join our volunteers!

Docent Training for 2006 will begin this February. Be a part of this community-wide program that protects, restores and informs people about the Watsonville Wetlands. Sign up for our next training program, starting the first week of February. Learn from the experts about the history and geology of the wetlands and gain skills in teaching others about wildlife habitats in the Pajaro Valley. To learn more about this outstanding opportunity and very important program please see our website: watsonvillewetlandswatch.org

A Thumbnail Sketch of Three New Employees

By Ann B. Jenkins

WWW has welcomed three outstanding new employees in the past nine months. As you read you will understand why each is a 'perfect fit' for his or her particular job title.

RACHEL GARRETT, Coordinator, Patrick J. Fitz Wetlands Education Research Center (WERC)

"My real passion is wetlands and watersheds, so it was natural to focus on these during my graduate work for an M.A. at the Monterey Institute of International Studies," explained Rachel Garrett. "Originally, I thought I'd like to be involved with policy on a broader level. But, the longer I lived on the central coast, the more I realized that everything happens locally. Here there is a real sense of community ownership of our natural resources." Although she is a native of Colorado and graduated from the University of Colorado with a major in Spanish and a minor in Biology, Rachel said she fell in love with the natural beauty of the central coast when she came to visit her grandparents during vacations.

Before doing graduate work, Rachel worked as a program manager for Quirk, a software company in Denver. "I worked with translators translating into Spanish and Italian." At Quirk, she said she learned a lot about "managing projects, coordinating schedules and working with diverse personalities." She has also been an intern at the Elkhorn Slough Foundation and the Nature Conservancy and did specialized outreach to the Spanish-speaking community for the Monterey Bay Regional Water Pollution Control Agency.

She is bi-lingual and has lived in Mexico City, studied in Costa Rica and traveled in Bolivia.

The Fitz WERC center is a valuable asset to the wetlands system. For Rachel it is "a unique place-based resource for the Pajaro Valley." "It represents this unique wetlands system. It can't be duplicated anywhere else," she added. She loves the variety in her job and would not like to be "pigeonholed" in one project. She is intrigued by all the energy and enthusiasm behind the WERC project-coming from all sections of the community.

"I am really looking forward to working with the youth and harnessing all that creative and optimistic energy. The young people are really the keystone. I

can't wait to see that light bulb go off when they start to connect the dots and begin to discern the importance of protecting and restoring this unique ecological system."

JONATHAN PILCH, Restoration Specialist

During a semester off from studies at UC Berkeley, Jonathan Pilch took an apprenticeship at Apr-ovecho, an organic garden near Eugene, Oregon. He learned a lot about organic gardening, sustainable forestry, and solar technology. "This awakened me, and I came back to UC much more focused." He completed his Geography major in short order and graduated in May of 2004. His days at UC included involvement in a community struggle to preserve a university-owned farm and convert it into an urban agriculture demonstration farm. The struggle continues.

After graduation, and under the guidance of a colleague of one of his UC professors, he joined several other students in work and travel in South America, mostly in Ecuador and Peru. "We worked on rural development — sustainable agriculture projects-organic coffee, and a native potato project in the Peruvian Andes," he explained. "Organizing small farmers in sustainable agriculture projects was very challenging but pretty amazing," he added. He began the five-month experience in Ecuador by completing an intensive course in Spanish and living with a family. He is fluent. After college, he also worked on a seed farm in Vermont.

His assignment with the Wetlands Watch includes principally the restoration of 30 acres of the Fish and Game reserve near the new Pajaro Valley High School. Officially, it is called the West Struve Slough Community Restoration project. Also, under a National Fish and Wildlife Grant (NFWF), he is working with John Pritchard (see later paragraphs) and others to construct a grassed waterway. He is also working on a housing mitigation project. WWW is restoring small pieces of property next to the expansive new housing developments. Jonathan also has assignments at Amesti Elementary School in the Greenhouse. Fourth graders come to the Greenhouse to learn about the various plants, and how to propagate native plants. He does classroom presentations about the watersheds and the wetlands and is one of

Habitat Improvements Proceed At Pajaro Valley High School

Pajaro Valley High School (PVHS) habitat restoration activities were in full force during 2005. This is good news since there were timeline delays in 2004 in meeting the Biological Restoration Plan (BRP) requirements due to difficulty with site preparation, plant & seed acquisition, as well as the weather. As most "The Watch" readers know, the BRP is the road map for how to preserve, restore and enhance the environmentally sensitive habitat areas (ESHA), as well as the storm water detention basins, on the 38 acres of sensitive habitat outside the developed area of this new high school.

Implementation of the BRP measures continued to receive close monitoring by Watsonville Wetlands Watch (WWW) in 2005, the third of an eight-year program schedule for restoration and enhancement. This work is greatly facilitated by the PVHS Environment and Construction Oversight Partnership Committee composed of PVUSD, City of Watsonville and WWW representatives.

Primary 2005 restoration and enhancement activities included:

- * Soil Preparation on both the West Struve Slough ESHA and the Hanson Slough ESHA;
- * Irrigation System Implementation
- * Seeding and planting of West Struve Slough ESHA in the Spring;
- * Seeding of most of the Hanson Slough ESHA in the Fall;
- * Flagging on the Hanson Slough ESHA with planting of approximately 100 plants;
- * On-going plant maintenance; and,
- * Monitoring (including oversight of imple-

mentation of the nine wetland and upland habitat modifications to the BRP put forward by WWW and approved by the CA. Coastal Commission as Addendum #2 to the BRP.)

WWW is looking forward to involving more of its members, as well as the public, in restoration and monitoring activities during 2006. Coming up on Saturday, January 28th at 9:00 AM (meet in front of the campus entrance off Harkins Slough Road) is our third Community Planting Day. PVUSD has over 1,500 native plants that need to get in the ground as soon as possible during the rainy season to establish their roots.

Later in the Spring we will be performing plant maintenance activities including weeding, plant protection, and (when needed) plant replacement. In the realm of monitoring, we now have two years of Bird Point Count Sampling Surveys that are looking promising. Under discussion are several wildlife enhancement projects that will reinforce this trend.

We look forward to letting WWW members and others know more about these and other efforts taking place during the next year All of which are part of WWW's ongoing commitment to the helping this area become a living monument to the betterment of both the wildlife that depend upon this site for their survival and of the students for whom it is integral to their future.

by Chris Lyons, Planning & Conservation Committee Member and WWW representative to the PVHS Environment and Construction Oversight Partnership Committee.

Time to renew!

We try to keep our renewal cycle starting at the beginning of the year, so would appreciate your renewal membership to the Watsonville Wetlands Watch at this time. Membership of \$25 a year/\$15 student or senior, supports efforts to preserve and protect slough systems in the Watsonville area. You will also receive The Watch, our quarterly newsletter.

Name _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip _____

Send your check to Watsonville Wetlands Watch
Post Office Box 1239
Freedom, CA 95019-1239

Watsonville City Planning Commission Opens Its Ears To Watsonville Wetlands Watch Concerns.

Since the beginning of WWW's existence, we have been the mosquito in the ear of Watsonville City Planners, always advocating for the preservation of wetlands, their protection and their appreciation. We finally have the attention of the current Planning Commission with regard to the Updated Watsonville General Plan. This has come about through the efforts of many of us who have sat through countless meetings, spoken out at most of them and written more than several letters.

In November, 2005 the Commission accepted and recommended for approval to the City Council the General Plan Update 2030, incorporating the following recommendations:

- Minimum setbacks to be established between development and environmentally sensitive lands.
- WWW participation in forming the specific plans for the Menabe /Burgstrom Property targeted for industrial development.
- Establishment of a wetlands management policy.
- Areas west of Highway 1 not now in the city to be deleted from the Plan.

We will continue to negotiate with the Planning Commission and the City staff about the details of these recommendations, and we will be offering more recommendations as development continues within and around the city. Nothing in land use policy is ever complete, but the important gain in these last events is that we now have the City's respectful attention. We have learned that persistence and the spirit of compromise work.

Some of the issues we will be pursuing in the future:

- Wider setbacks to ensure habitat protection.
- Funding for a comprehensive wetlands maintenance plan
- Adequate migration space for wildlife

through the wetlands corridor on the Watsonville Slough.

- Special status designation for species that are 'locally unique', with a published list of these important residents of the wetlands.
- A plan to reduce the impact of development on the natural habitat for the Menabe Burgstrom Property (soon to be annexed).
- Environmental oversight of Larkin Valley/ Buena Vista area which is scheduled to be annexed within the next 25 years.
- Expansion of the Glossary of Terms in the General Plan to include accurate definitions of: 'Riparian Habitat', 'Wetlands', 'Environmentally Sensitive Habitat' and 'Special Status Plants and Animals'.
- Opportunity for public comment on Watsonville's General Trails Plan.

We are concerned about the spiraling growth rate predicted by AMBAG for the City of Watsonville in the next 25 years (47.5% increase). This will require our continued vigilance. Future land use plans should require creative solutions to house our burgeoning population within the city boundaries. We must try to protect farmland and open space as much as possible. The quality of life for all of us, including the wild things, depends on this.

This was a small but significant victory. We now have a receptive audience among the Watsonville City staff and within the Planning Commission. Now our job is to keep the planners, the staff and the City Council informed about environmental issues affecting the Pajaro Valley's wetlands.

Members interested in these absorbing politics should call Jim Van Houten, Chairman of the Planning and Conservation Committee, (684-1861).

– *Marian Martinez*

the resource specialist-guides during the student field trips to the Fish and Game Reserve property. “I enjoy teaching the young folks experiential science and encouraging them to be active players in our community. I can’t imagine a more satisfying job in terms of end results. I get to spend all of my time giving back to the environment, and the end result will be to make this area a better place in which to live.”

JOHN PRITCHARD, Wetlands Steward

John Pritchard is working under the umbrella of a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grant and is part of the team working on the Grassed Waterway Project. “All the runoff from the new Pajaro Valley High school flows through the retention basins and through the Fish and Game reserve and 400 feet to the slough. Our charge is to put native plants along the waterway to filter this now heavy runoff. I am also charged with maintaining the 30 acres of Fish and Game grasslands – mowing and planting plots,” he explained.

After a couple of years at Cal Poly, Pritchard (from Woodside) decided he would rather be outdoors, hiking or volunteering in various ecology projects. So, he proceeded to tote up 15 years of volunteer work with various environmental and ecological groups. He worked as a volunteer with the Wildlands Restoration Team organized in Santa Cruz County. He worked with Santa Cruz State Parks in the removal of invasive plants and exotics.

Pritchard then worked 10 years with the Elkhorn Native Plant Nursery as a project coordinator. “This was a great experience. I learned about all the different aspects of the Native Plant Nursery. I worked in the office, did sales of native plants and went out into the field searching for seeds and cuttings – like a big treasure hunt.” Pritchard said he learned a lot about plants that way. He also did landscaping and habitat restoration for the nursery.

He joined Wetlands Watch about nine months ago fulfilling various assignments. Last year, he attended a symposium sponsored by the California Invasive Plant Council. After the conference, he went on a field trip to the Llano Seco Ranch where the native California Hibiscus grows and where he had a good look at Sand Hill Cranes. He has backpacked in Lassen Park in October (cooold) and commented that “all the sedges turned to color.”

In five years, he hopes to still be involved with
Spring 2006

habitat restoration. “I enjoy everything I do. I especially enjoy encouraging people to get closer to wild things.” Recently on one of his sojourns on the Fish and Game property, he was delighted to discover the burrows (and their occupants) of burrowing owls. “Surprises like this make the stewardship a whole lot of fun,” he added.



BAY BREEZE PLANTING DAY - March 11 Come out and join the neighborhood in planting native and beautiful plants along the wetland waterway. Meet at 9:00 at either the corner of Ohlone Parkway and Harkins Slough Road, or in front of Erik’s Deli at Green Valley and Main St. Please wear layered clothing, a hat, and bring a bottle of water. We’ll supply the plants, tools, gloves, and a snack. Hope to see you out there!

Good Neighbors to the Slough

It was the sweeping views of Struve Slough that enticed Tony and Lorrie Rubio to leave their long-time residence in Fremont and move to the new Bay Breeze development off Ohlone Parkway in April 2004. The couple had always known they would retire someday somewhere along the California coast, and over the years they had looked at houses from Ft. Bragg down to Santa Barbara. The day they first saw what was to become their new neighborhood in the summer of 2003 was Lorrie's birthday. That was the reason Tony joined Lorrie and her sister and brother-in-law, Elaine and Scott Brazelton for an antique outing to Moss Landing, and on the way home on a whim they all stopped by Bay Breeze in virtually unknown Watsonville to check it out.

As Tony puts it, "I saw the house adjacent to the slough and asked 'Where do I sign up?'" Even the reality of a longer commute over the hill to Santa Clara, where Tony works 50-hour weeks as a surveyor for Kier & Wright, was not a deterrent. When asked what in particular attracted him about the slough, Tony refers to the entire ecosystem: "It's the openness, the frogs, the birds, the tranquility, the setting sun." He chuckles when he remembers the purchase contract contained a disclosure statement about the "noisy" frogs and says that the first spring "the frogs were so loud their dogs (Maggie and Moose, two Jack Russells) were scared."

Once moved in, Tony started taking pictures every Saturday morning from his second story balcony of the view, compiling a vivid picture of the seasonal changes in the slough. Lorrie, a California Certified Nursery professional who had previously managed Orchard Supply Hardware's retail nursery in Newark, put in a lovely garden. However, the couple grew increasingly dismayed to see tall weeds flourishing in the easement which sloped down to the walking trail and the slough behind all the neighborhood houses. But what to do? Who to ask?

Intrigued by a WWW flyer left on his doorstep recruiting volunteers, Tony became a regular on the Watch's bimonthly Saturday workdays. There he learned from Laura Camera, our Restoration Specialist at the time and a passionate advocate for the slough, that the weeds in his backyard were Italian thistle, Fennel, Poison hemlock and Harding grass. These opportunistic invasives were choking out native California rose, Coyote Brush, and Coffee berry

planted by WWW personnel. When Tony and Lorrie attended a Restoration Committee meeting in the fall of 2004 and learned of the lack of funding add manpower to adequately maintain the Struve Slough easement at Bay Breeze, Tony quickly suggested that the neighbors would probably be very glad to help out if they just knew how. The Rubios offered to spearhead an outreach, and so the Bay Breeze Project began to take shape.

Like most good ideas, implementation required patience, perseverance, and vision. Over the next 11 months many collaborated. Jerry Busch, John Pritchard and Tom Schroeder compiled a plant list of 26 different wildflowers, grasses, sedges and shrubs indigenous to the Pajaro Valley watershed for the neighbors to plant. It was vitally important to use only locally propagated stock to protect the unique genetic makeup of the slough flora from contamination. Two local native plant nurseries, Elkhorn Native Plant Nursery and Native Revival Nursery, reviewed the list to ensure they had sufficient supplies of locally propagated stock for purchase. No trees were included in the list so as not to block views of the slough. To help homeowners understand that they were creating good habitat for local fauna as well, plants which supply nectar for hummingbirds or constitute a food source for birds and other animals were starred on the list. Tom got the Department of Fish and Game to sign off on the list, while Bob Culbertson got City of Watsonville approval for homeowners to plant designated natives on a 15-foot wide strip adjacent to their back fences.

Meanwhile Tony and Robin Spring created a flyer to educate homeowners about natives: the importance of winter planting, soil preparation, and irrigation requirements. Included was information on the location of native plant demonstration gardens, as well as books and online resources about growing natives. Robin, Rachel Garrett, and Jonathan Pilch translated the flyer into Spanish. A special thanks is due to San Jose Blue who printed the colorful 4-page flyer at cost. Other handouts included copies of the Watch's latest newsletter, California Native Plant Society's "Why Use Native Plants?", CA Invasive Plant Council's "Don't Plant a Pest!", and Dept. of Fish and Game's bilingual brochure on how to prevent contamination of local water sources. Lorrie assembled the packets for distribution in special bags that could be hung on doorknobs if no one was home.

Mark Your Calendars!

The Community Restoration Calendar

Join the community effort to restore the wetlands of Watsonville. Meet rain or shine at 9:00 am in front of Erik's Deli Café, in the Orchard Supply Parking lot at the corner of Green Valley and Main St. Wear layered clothing, sturdy shoes (or rubber boots) and a hat. We supply gloves, tools, and something nutritious to keep us working. All ages welcome. We work until noon and always include time for hiking, bird watching, and learning about the wetlands and local native plants.

Saturday January 28 A school & community wide effort to turn once-farmed fields into important wetland habitat around Pajaro Valley High School.

Saturday February 11 More mulching, weeding, and planting of natives in the uplands of the ecological reserve.

Saturday February 28 Weeding and planting continue. Join us for these last days of Winter!

Saturday March 11 Join the community of Bay Breeze to restore the slopes of the neighborhood for this planting day in the sloughs.

Saturday March 25 Celebrate Spring by planting natives and helping to weed around and care for the native plants on the ecological reserve.

Saturday April 8 Planting and weeding continue.

Docent Training: February 2006. To learn more about this outstanding opportunity and very important program please see our website: watsonvillewetlandswatch.org.

March 18: WERC Open House From 12 to 4 PM tour the new Patrick J. Fitz Wetland Educational Resource Center at the new Pajaro Valley High School.

Tuesday February 7 From 4 to 6 PM. BWET integrated curriculum sharing session at the Fitz WERC center.

Teacher training. Teacher training at Elkhorn Slough and CSUMB with continuing education units offered. For more information visit: www.elkhornslough.org

Native Plant Demonstration Gardens at the Patrick J. Fitz Wetlands Educational Resource Center. We are designing and creating these gardens in collaboration with the native plant landscaping class at Cabrillo Horticulture Department. If you are interested in participating or contributing resources or time to this project, please contact: Jonathan (728-4106)

GOOD NEIGHBORS...

On a bright Sunday in late September, Lorrie, Robin and Tony knocked on the doors of all 56 houses adjacent to the slough. The 27 different people we talked to welcomed the idea with interest, many grateful to have a chance to get rid of the weeds. By December it was clear the project was taking off. As many as 15 easement plats were weed-free and little planting flags were sprouting all over the hillsides. Hoping to inspire others by example, Lorrie and Tony have added Beeplant, Yarrow and Little Hill-dweller Sedge to the existing wild roses and coffee berries on their back hill. Just in time for the winter rains, they are sowing seeds of Miniature Lupine and California Poppy for a show of spring color. The Rubios hope their native plant demonstration garden will be an inspiration to all who walk by and will continue the 'domino effect' as more and more slough residents become active participants in the project.

When Tony and Lorrie first saw Struve Slough, they sensed immediately it was a special place. Now they know just how special this freshwater slough habitat actually is, they are working with their neighbors at Bay Breeze to keep it that way - one backyard at a time!

– Robin Spring



The Watch

Watsonville Wetlands Watch Newsletter
Post Office Box 1239
Freedom, CA 95019-1239

BUILDING OUR NEW WETLANDS LIBRARY AT THE WERC!

Help us meet our goal to build an outstanding Pajaro Valley focused library at the new Patrick J. Fitz Wetlands Educational Resource Center. We are looking for local and regional resources in the following topic areas:

- Flora & Fauna
- Watersheds & Wetlands
- Public Resource Management & Land Use Policy
- History, Archeology, & Ohlone Culture
- Geology & Hydrology
- Photography, Art & Nature Journals
- Geography & GIS
- Technology & Science
- Agriculture
- Horticulture & Native Landscaping
- Weather/ Floods
- Monterey Bay and Marine Sanctuary

We are also interested in field guides, activity guides, maps, aerial photos, and video, published after 2000. All donated resources should be in good condition.

For our 'wish list', please refer to our website, www.watsonvillewetlandswatch.org.

Please e-mail or mail us a list of the resources you are interested in contributing, and we will call you when we are ready to receive them.

Thank you for your generous support of the WERC! We look forward to seeing you at our open house this spring.

Thank you!

Rachel Garrett, Coordinator, Fitz WERC Center 831-728-1156 Rachel@watsonvillewetlandswatch.org



YES! I would like to support wetlands education by contributing to the WERC resource library.

Enclosed please find my donation of:

\$25 (each bookplate) x ___ bookplates = \$_____

I would like my name to read as follows on my bookplate: _____