

## Bald Eagles Return to the Laguna!

*Denise Cadman, Past Board Member and City of Santa Rosa Natural Resource Specialist*

Many locals are not aware that we have Bald Eagles living in the Laguna or have not yet had an opportunity to view this magnificent bird in our watershed. Bald Eagles have been nesting in the Laguna since 2007, fledging 14 eaglets. The Eagles have become a fairly common site for bird watchers, kayakers and people fishing and hiking around Occidental Road Bridge and north to Guerneville Road.

Bald Eagle populations plummeted in the mid 20th century, mostly due to the use of a pesticide called DDT (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane). The pesticide was not fatal to the adult birds but disrupted the formation of the eggshell. The thin shelled egg could not withstand the weight of an adult incubating the egg, making it nearly impossible for young to hatch. Population numbers plummeted in the contiguous United States and Bald Eagles were extirpated or became locally extinct in many states. The Eagles fared better in Alaska and Canada where less agriculture meant lower pesticide use.

DDT was banned in the United States in 1972 and since then the Eagles have been making a steady comeback across the nation. Bald Eagle numbers have been steadily increasing in this and surrounding counties since the 1980s, with early strongholds around major lakes.

Bald Eagles are considered a top predator, preying mostly on fish, although they will opportunistically feed on carrion and other game. That explains why Eagles, as well as other avian top predators such as Ospreys, Peregrine Falcons and Brown Pelicans, were particularly vulnerable to DDT. The pesticide increases or biomagnifies as it moves



through the food web. DDT runs off croplands in very small quantities but concentrations grow as it is absorbed by phytoplankton, which feed zooplankton, which feed small fish, which feed big fish, which finally become the prey of Eagles.

The return of Bald Eagles living year around and nesting in the Laguna is a sign of good health in the watershed. When an ecosystem can support a population of top predators that means the lower levels of the food web are functioning.

Be on the lookout for Eagles along High School Road, at the Occidental Road Bridge and when visiting the Laguna Learning Center (they are hard to miss with a wingspan between 6- 7 ½ feet!). The adults are instantly recognizable with a white head and tail. You may see a huge bird with a prominent hooked beak that does not have these telltale markings. Juveniles are brown, speckled with white, until they reach sexual maturity at 4 or 5 years of age. The breeding season is already underway with our breeding pair mending last year's nest. Chances of observing this majestic bird are good and growing!

Upper: An adult flying with a youngster, aged 2-3 years old. According to the photographer, the young eagle repeatedly attempted to fly with the adult but was pushed away until it finally left. Lower: A newly fledged eaglet from last year, just learning to fly. Photos: Joan Langfeld.

## Executive Director Report - *David Bannister*

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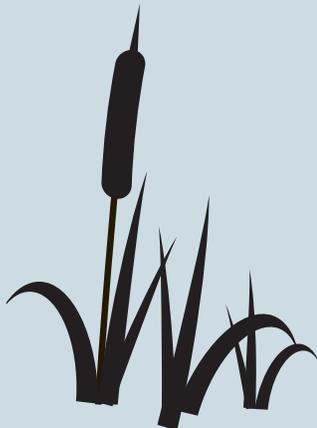
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I recently spoke to a packed house at REI as part of their ongoing speaker series. The talk was about outings opportunities in the Laguna area—hiking and kayaking specifically. Based on the over capacity audience and their enthusiastic response, look for this same talk to be part of our own public Nature Education series to be conducted from our new Learning Center building. It was an hour and a half slide show talk with plenty of time for Q&A. Participants were provided hiking and trail maps to take home. We were just informed that the Sebastopol noon Rotary has supplied us with a small grant to produce these maps in brochure form. Thanks Rotary! We will have these maps to hand out soon; they will be available at the Learning Center for free.

Special thanks go to REI for hosting and publicizing these talks and for their community involvement and support of outdoor and nature oriented non-profits like the Laguna Foundation and Land Paths. I am a member of the Go Local movement but there are some national companies that become local by their local involvement. They assign a staff member to do community outreach and they donate goods and services to causes that they deem worthy. REI and Whole Foods are two that come to mind. We appreciate their support!

Speaking of local support, be sure to read the article about our recent Tree-A-Thon in this issue of *Meanderings*. This grass roots fundraiser is a completely local event with support from local businesses and individuals. We are so lucky to live in a community where people care about our incredible local environment and are willing to donate their time and money to make it better. We cannot thank them enough.

## New Field Trip Location for Learning Laguna

*Christine Fontaine, Director of Education Programs*

*Learning Laguna* and field trips have long been a school-year highlight for 2-4th grade students around the watershed. Spring visits to Sebastopol's Laguna Wetland Preserve delight with impressive views of the Laguna, lots of native plants to focus on, and frequent sightings of Western pond turtles. This year students (and docents!) were even treated to views of black-crowned night herons resting in trees along the Laguna's bank. Because the site is open to the public, students can bring their families back and then become the teacher themselves.

Fall field trips to Kelly Wetland are special for the secluded wildlife habitat and the up-close experience of being in a wetland. Laguna Trail construction work challenged us to find a new fall field trip site that was just as rewarding. Fortunately we did: Lower Stone Farm. The site is reserved for Learning Laguna field trips so students really get the quiet experience of connecting to nature. This sheltered location at the intersection of the Laguna and Irwin Creek is beautiful. Flocks of white pelicans, crawdads galore, and majestic valley oak trees and the life they support provide lots of opportunities for discovery and awe-inspiring moments.



If we lay down will the turkey vulture come closer for a look? YES!  
Photo by Greg Zirbel.

The enthusiasm of this Hidden Valley 4th grader really shines: "*I can't believe that tree we saw was over 100 years old! I also learned that trees can live up to 500 years old! That is so amazing! This was the best field trip ever.*"

## Save the Date! Learning Center Open House Saturday, May 26, 11am-4pm

With help from the California Coastal Conservancy, the City of Santa Rosa, private foundation grants, and generous donations from many individuals, the Laguna Foundation is pleased to announce the construction completion of the Learning Center. The 2000 square foot building will serve as a classroom for all types of Laguna Foundation and community educational events. The beautiful interpretive signs, observation deck, pond and expansive viewscape highlight and celebrate the Laguna de Santa Rosa.

Join us on Saturday, May 26 for your first chance to see it all! This exciting open house will be packed with special events and fun learning activities for all. Bird watching, nursery tours, history talks, horse-drawn rides, overviews of agriculture on the property, flora and fauna chats, showings of the new DVD version of Denise Cadman's Tiddalick story, tasty treats available from StreetEatz food truck, a Laguna themed art show, and engaging environmental education fun for kids of all ages all promise to add up to a great day. Come anytime between 11 AM and 3 PM and plan to spend at least an hour. Of course, the more time you can spend the more fun you will have!



Come see the interpretive signage about birds at the wetland demonstration pond.  
Photo by Maggie Hart.

## New Volunteer Opportunity: Laguna Guides

Do you want more in-depth knowledge about the Laguna but have not been able to participate in Laguna Docent training? Do you want to volunteer in the Education Department but Learning Laguna weekday mornings don't work with your schedule? Well, the new Laguna Guides training and volunteer program might be a good fit for you.

With the new Center opening very soon, we need more volunteers to help with weekend education programs and to help us "staff" the Center. So, we are designing a training program that will teach about the Laguna and how to lead tours at the site plus Lower Stone Farm, Sebastopol Preserve, Kelly Farm Wetland and on the new Laguna Trail once it opens. After training, Guides will have lots of fun opportunities to share the wonders of the Laguna with visitors from near and far and to participate in community nature celebrations and festivals. Plus, there will be engaging continuing education events and lots of potential new friends.

**Mark your calendar** for the evenings of May 24, 31, June 7, 14 and the mornings of May 26, June 2, 9th and 16 and keep your eye on our e-newsletter for developing details. For more information, contact Christine Fontaine (707) 527-9277 x102 or [christine@lagunafoundation.org](mailto:christine@lagunafoundation.org)

## New Building Availability

In addition to the Laguna Foundation's general use, including educational and fund-raising activities, we will be renting the building to organizations, businesses and community groups for uses that include professional meetings, educational programs, conferences, retreats, arts-related events, exhibits and similar activities. All proceeds from these rentals will benefit the Laguna Foundation. For more information, contact Maggie Hart (707) 527-9277 x107 or [maggie@lagunafoundation.org](mailto:maggie@lagunafoundation.org)

## In Memoriam: Barbara Kay Davidson, Chris Beck

Barbara went through docent training in 2000 and was active on the Learning Laguna curriculum committee in the early years of the program. Chris Beck lived along the Laguna as a child and realized a dream when he became a docent in 2009.

Donations have been made in their memory by: Steve and Suzanne Abrams, Caryn Fried, Megan Bycel, Heidi Stewart and John Weinstein, The Cordell Family, Diane Lebovitz, Nancy and Jim Dempsey.

# Springtime on the Santa Rosa Plain

Hattie Brown, Conservation Science Program Manager

With all this warm weather spring may descend on the Santa Rosa Plain sooner than expected and spring means vernal pool monitoring. 2012 will be the 6th year of the Laguna Foundation's *Adopt a Vernal Pool* monitoring program. Every year, in partnership with the California Native Plant Society Milo Baker Chapter, we train Citizen Scientist volunteers interested in plants to identify native, endangered, and invasive species, and quantify (or count) populations of endangered plants. If you are interested in native flora or botany, this is an excellent opportunity to learn and collect valuable data at the same time.

It is only through the efforts of many people that we can foster the recovery of species that only grow in Sonoma County. If you are a new volunteer interested in participating in the *Adopt a Vernal Pool* program and becoming a Citizen Scientist you must attend a training session to learn how to use our plant survey protocol. Returning volunteers are also encouraged to attend to a training session to review the *Adopt a Vernal Pool* process.

**Training Dates:** Friday, March 23, 5:30-7pm OR Saturday, March 24, 10:30am-noon. You only need to attend ONE training, so please contact Hattie Brown to RSVP or to arrange an alternative date (707) 527-9277 x105 or [hattie@lagunafoundation.org](mailto:hattie@lagunafoundation.org)



The endangered annual flower Burke's goldfields. It is one of three plants monitored in the *Adopt a Vernal Pool* program.  
Photo by Hattie Brown.

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## Relevance and History of Laguna de Santa Rosa Wetland Preserve

John Guardino, Restoration Program Manager

Many Foundation volunteers and Tree-A-Thon participants have now had the opportunity to visit and help with restoration activities at City of Sebastopol Laguna de Santa Rosa Wetland Preserve (formerly known as "Meadowlark Field"). This work, funded by grants from the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District and the California Department of Parks and Recreation, includes the installation & maintenance of native trees and shrubs. Some of you have asked; "How does this project fit in with and compliment all of the other work the Foundation is doing in the Laguna?", and "What are the benefits?" A useful place to start in answering these questions is to look at the history of the site.

Owned by the City of Sebastopol, the Laguna de Santa Rosa Wetland Preserve is a 53-acre parcel preserved for habitat, open space, public access and nature interpretation. Located just east of Sebastopol, it can be accessed seasonally from Laguna Park within the City limits or from a temporary trailhead on Route 12 just west of the Chevron gas station. In the future, the Preserve will also be accessible from and connected to the larger Laguna de Santa Rosa Protected Lands trail system.

A brief historical sketch of Preserve portrays a place subject to many land uses over the decades, some of which have negatively

impacted its natural habitat. In 1925 the site was partially leveled for a landing strip, hangar and parking area, which was active until the early 1930s when it became a residence and a storage site for auto parts. In the 1970s the field began serving as the receiving ground for apple processing wastewater. This continued until the early 1990s when the principal land use became grazing. Around 2000, grazing was removed as the field was made into a public park. Walking trails follow the field's perimeter and provide entry to its center. Through this history and probably beginning much earlier, large valley oaks in the parcel's upland were either removed or died and portions of the riparian corridor were cleared or heavily thinned. In 2010 the site was protected as a wetland preserve in perpetuity through a conservation easement by the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District which facilitated the Foundation's restoration work at the site.

Restoration of the Laguna de Santa Rosa Wetland Preserve is part of the Laguna Foundation's larger Middle Reach Restoration Project (MRRP). The MRRP is a multi-year effort intended to restore habitat and ecological function along 1.8 miles of the Laguna de Santa Rosa's east side between Highway 12 and Occidental Road. This section of the channel is part of the Laguna's middle reach and includes both private and public lands across a variety of habitats.



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1% FOR THE PLANET is a growing global network of 1,472 companies that donate 1% of their sales to a network of 2,779 environmental organizations worldwide. The Laguna Foundation is one of those non-profits that has passed the approval process!

If you own or even work in a business, won't you consider joining 1% FOR THE PLANET (or encouraging the company you work in to do so) and designating the Laguna Foundation your 1% recipient? Listed below are two local businesses that have done so; we thank them profoundly and encourage you to patronize these local supporters of a healthy Laguna!

**Spiritus Financial Planning-** [www.spiritusfinancial.com](http://www.spiritusfinancial.com)  
**True Liberty Bags-** [www.truelibertybags.com](http://www.truelibertybags.com)

## Seeking Contributions for the Laguna Bird Anthology

Here's an opportunity to contribute written and visual art to an anthology, helping to raise money for the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation.

The theme of the anthology is birds. Your reflections should focus on observations or experiences taken from the Laguna de Santa Rosa watershed. Multiple contributions will be considered. We are planning for a printing in color to include many beautiful illustrations and photographs. We are accepting contributions until June, but don't delay. Please contact Denise Cadman by phone or email and receive more information about the project.

Denise Cadman  
[dcadman@srcity.org](mailto:dcadman@srcity.org)  
707-543-3408



## Laguna Keepers Event Calendar



Laguna Keepers are the Foundation's habitat restoration volunteers. Each month, in partnership with the City of Santa Rosa, we meet to give the Laguna a little hands-on love!

All workdates are from 9 AM to noon. Wear sturdy shoes and be prepared to get dirty. Snacks provided, but bring gloves, water, and friends! Only heavy rain cancels.

### Saturday, April 14

#### Native Plant Demonstration Garden & Joint Wetlands

Celebrate Earth Day by exploring the diversity of California native species and planting at the Joint Wetlands. Meet at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, 4300 Llano Road, Santa Rosa; follow signs to the "Admin" building.

### Saturday, May 12

#### Delta Pond

Admit it: it's fun to install squishy, wiggly DriWater! Plants appreciate it too. Enter on the southwest side of Santa Rosa creek at Willowside Rd. (just north of Summerfield Waldorf school, 655 Willowside Road, Santa Rosa) and drive 1/2 mile to parking.

**Laguna Keepers take a break June-August, during the driest time of the year, and resume in September.**

**Questions?** Contact John Guardino: 527-9277x108 or [john@lagunafoundation.org](mailto:john@lagunafoundation.org). The full Laguna Keepers event calendar is available online at [www.lagunafoundation.org](http://www.lagunafoundation.org).

**To receive reminder emails** about upcoming workdays, please email [Nancy@lagunafoundation.org](mailto:Nancy@lagunafoundation.org) to be placed on our electronic mailing list.

## Third Annual Tree-A-Thon

On one of the few stormy days of this entire winter, 70 wonderful volunteers came out to plant 600 trees and shrubs on the City of Sebastopol's Laguna Wetlands Preserve. These fantastic supporters of the Foundation included volunteer fundraisers, their donors, and experienced Laguna Keepers who taught the other volunteers what to do and how to do it.

For the first time this year we had a Business Partnership Program; special thanks go to these new business supporters (listed on the right). Please patronize these local businesses! Special thanks to Redwood Credit Union who had 17 employees and family members come out and help with the planting. Another special thanks to Sonoma-Cutrer Vineyards who planned on having about 25 employees come out. The threatening weather kept them away but we are rescheduling them for another day; we still have 1,500 trees to plant on that field so there will be plenty for them to do!

And, of course, many, many thanks to the volunteers and their donors who raised or donated over \$24,000 to support our Restoration, Education and Conservation Science Programs. Special mention goes to our top fundraisers:

- 1. Denise Cadman \$3,771** -top fundraiser two years running
- 2. Christine Engel \$3,302** -last year's third place fundraiser and this year had the most donors
- 3. Anita Smith \$1,305** - first year as a fundraiser and already in third place
- 4. Quinlan Team \$1,260** – a family affair with young Emma and brother Brandon
- 5. Maggie Hart \$1,207** – top staff fundraiser more than doubled her total from last year
- 6. Brent Reed \$1,150** – our newest staff member and what an awesome start
- 7. Natalie Menacho \$774** – another first year fundraiser

We are SO GRATEFUL for the tremendous support we have received from the community for this event. In addition to all the people and businesses we've already mentioned, thanks to Whole Foods, Starbucks and Round Table Pizza for donating food and beverages.

The Tree-A-Thon is a great event! Not only does it generate vital funds for the Foundation, it also gets plants in the ground with volunteer labor—an absolute requirement for a project like this. And of course those trees will restore natural beauty, improve water quality, and improve wildlife habitat and connectivity. Finally, everyone who participated in the day of the event came away with big smiles on their faces knowing they had done a good thing for their community and the environment. Talk about a win/win project!

Stay tuned for our fourth annual Tree-A-Thon in March 2013.

### Thank You Business Sponsors

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Volunteers from Redwood Credit Union.  
Photo by Howard Kalmer.

# Thank you to our generous supporters since our last *Meanderings*...

## Tree-A-Thon Donations

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The **Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation**, founded in 1989, works to preserve, restore, and inspire greater understanding and appreciation of the Laguna de Santa Rosa wetland complex, which is the largest tributary of the Russian River and one of Sonoma County's richest wildlife areas. The Foundation conducts educational programs, implements preservation and restoration projects, conducts scientific research, works with landowners and public agencies to protect and improve Laguna resources, and advocates for appropriately managed opportunities for the public to enjoy the Laguna.

Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation  
900 Sanford Road  
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(707) 527-9277  
[www.lagunafoundation.org](http://www.lagunafoundation.org)

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We regularly post announcements and photos to our Facebook page.

## Nestward Migration

**Docent-led walks to nesting colony at Delta Pond  
Saturday, April 28, multiple walk times available  
\$10 per person- annual fundraiser for the Bus Fund**

Sign-up for this early morning adventure and prepare for exciting sights and sounds! At a hidden Laguna location off Willowside Road is an impressive nesting colony of great blue herons, great egrets and double crested cormorants.

Once arriving at the site after a pleasant and informative docent-led walk, we are likely to see everything from courtship displays, nest building activity, adults incubating eggs, adults flying in with food trying to keep up with demanding feeding schedules, to chicks who are trying to out-compete nest-mates and prepare for first flight. Other possible treats include sightings of American white pelicans, a cliff swallow nesting colony and maybe even a bald eagle.

This event is always a sell-out so register early on our website! Approximately 3-mile walk over flat, uneven terrain. Full details emailed upon registration.

This photo of three Great Egret chicks was taken at Delta Pond. Using binoculars you will be able to see the nests up close like this!  
Photo by Don Jackson.

