Visitors & Programs:
The Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center (AMIC) was visited by 16,132 people in 2017 (Fig. 1), comprised of 12,795 adults and 3,605 kids (Fig. 2), which was 2,098 more visitors than in 2016. The AMIC averaged slightly over 17,000 visitors per year in the last 5 years. 2017 hosted more youth visitors than any other year on record. Besides visitors from Humboldt County and many other areas of California, visitors who signed the guest book hailed from Canada, England, Italy, and 22 US states. Many visitors came specifically to see The Friends of the Arcata Marsh (FOAM) monthly art show, lectures and tours. The City Recreation Department conducted marsh camps for 8 weeks with a total of 158 kids ages 4 through 9 attending. Other tours and events such as Explore The Coast and Take A Child Outside day were held at the AMIC (details on page 2 under Tours and Lectures & Events).

Hours Open:
The AMIC was open for 2,603 hours in 2017 (over 200 more hours than 2016), averaging 216 hours per month (Fig.3). Approximately 33% of that time was staffed by volunteers. Most weekend days were staffed from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. with few closures. City staff managed daily operations at the AMIC on week days with some volunteer help. The AMIC remains a valuable asset to the City of Arcata as a visitor center for the area, local birding information and field guides, and a venue for FOAM and City events and meetings.
Volunteers:
Thirty-nine volunteers contributed 880.75 hours of AMIC staffing time in 2017 and 156 hours of tour leadership throughout the year. There were 6 new volunteers acquired and trained in 2017. New FOAM board member, Bill Prescott was awarded Volunteer of the Year for staffing AMIC over 150 hours and helping at special events. Kate Sequeira was also awarded Volunteer of the Year for staffing AMIC over 60 hours. Many volunteers also contributed to invasive plant removal work days and helping to manage the on-going effort of establishing the AMIC Native Plant Garden.

Tours:
FOAM conducted weekly Saturday walks and other special tours of the Arcata Marsh & Wildlife Sanctuary (AMWS) including a New Year’s Day walk, Thanksgiving Day walk, and slower speed tours. Volunteers conducted 47 regular tours for 199 participants in 2017 (Fig 4). January and July had the greatest number of regular tour participants. There were 38 special-request tours given for 995 participants (Fig 5). April and May had the greatest number of special requested tours and participants, which were mostly local school field trips. The grand total of tours offered at the Arcata Marsh in 2017 was 85 with 1,0194 participants.

The first sessions of the California Coastal Commission grant-funded Explore The Coast program was implemented in the summer of 2017, offering a 2-3 hour program for area youth including a guided tour of the AMWS, wetland model demonstration, and a Jr. Marsh Explorers Activity Handbook to take home. Seven sessions provided 248 youth with this fun and educational program.

Several school groups visited AMIC without a scheduled tour. On one occasion, a group of third graders witnessed the Barred Owl roosting in the Alder tree near the AMIC parking lot and experienced the wetland model demonstration. Several Godwit Days field trips visited the AMIC and the AMIC.

Lectures & Events:
FOAM coordinated 12 presentations with 396 attendees (increased by 124 from 2016). Subjects included natural wastewater treatment, mosses and ferns, coastal spring flowers and pollinators, fishes of Humboldt Bay, barn owls, riparian habitat, weasels, and more. City of Arcata’s Forest Ecology Lecture by Benjamin Iberle covered the topic of ninety-two years of tree growth and death in the Arcata Community Forest. The second lecture in the series is scheduled for January 2018. Other events such as Take A Child Outside Day, displaying artists’ receptions, and the FOAM annual volunteer appreciation lunch took place at the AMIC.
Bookstore:
The bookstore did well in 2017, with sales of $12,771.63 (Fig. 6), making a profit of $4,937.42, a slight increase from 2016. Sales tend to peak in early spring when visitors are here for Godwit Days, late summer when weather is the most favorable for outdoor adventuring, and during winter holiday shopping time. New book titles, kids activities, and new t-shirt designs were added to the inventory. Best-selling items were the Audubon birds with sound, Arcata Marsh & Wildlife Sanctuary logo hats, Jabebo earrings, FOAM t-shirts, and the Common Birds of the Arcata Marsh book. Advertising for holiday shopping in December likely attributed to the increase of sales that month, the highest monthly sales income on record.

Displays:
A new poster display was placed in one of the plexi-glass cases: “HSU River Otter Citizen Science Project” created by HSU wildlife department students and faculty and the “Bats in Humboldt County” poster (created by Interpretive Naturalist Gretchen O’Brien) remained in the other case due to its popularity with visitors. With a generous donation of $1,000 specifically for toddler-friendly displays and accessibility, a new science discovery table and small chairs was added to the exhibit hall. Two new wooden stools were placed for small children to access table-top activities and large magnifying glasses were purchased for the science table. More display items are planned to be added to the collection in 2018.

Friends of the Arcata Marsh continued with its monthly art shows, with a different artist every two months.

Building & Surrounding:
The Arcata Marsh Outdoor Amphitheater was completed in the fall of 2017 with bench seating, a metal storage box, and a donor plaque for those who gave $500 or more. Prepared insect specimens were acquired from the HSU entomology department and placed in the new display cabinet that replaced the gas wall heater in the exhibit hall.

A “Marsh Wheelchair” was acquired through a California Coastal Commission grant and is now available for free public use, checked out from the AMIC with an ID and credit card number left as collateral.

The non-motorized, multi-use, accessible Humboldt Bay North Trail was completed in 2017, spanning approximately 3 miles through the AMWS and around the bay along the highway 101 corridor.
Marsh Wildlife:
In 2017, 210 bird species were recorded at the Arcata Marsh: 159 in spring, 106 in summer, 193 in fall, and 140 in winter (Fig. 7). Spring, summer, and fall records surpassed the numbers recorded in 2016. Seventy-four species were recorded year-round. New species added to the Marsh list were California Towhee, Barred Owl, and Cassin’s Sparrow.
To date 334 species of birds have been reported at the Arcata Marsh according to eBird records, making the AMWS the #1 birding hotspot in Humboldt County.
Ten reports of river otter sightings came in, most of which reported 4 or 5 otters together. All reports were submitted to the HSU otter records data website.

Barred Owl, 1st recorded observation in the AMWS. Photo by Rob Fowler.

California Towhee, 1st recorded observation in the AMWS. Photo by Jose Luis Sandoval.

River Otter pup in Gearheart Marsh. Photo by Alan Peterson, Redwood Planet Media.

Future Plans:
Additions planned for 2018 include more temporary poster displays, prepared natural history displays, and possibly re-doing the giant puzzle. FOAM plans to purchase a touch-screen tablet for nature apps, videos, and interactive games. Outside AMIC, a fire ring may be added to the outdoor amphitheater area. Programs such as storytelling, skits, and puppet shows will be planned for summer and early fall when the weather is most favorable. The Explore The Coast program will be offered again as well as the Marsh Explorers and Young Explorers summer camps. Take A Child Outside Day is scheduled to take place at the AMIC and around the Log Pond in March of 2018.