2015 Year End Report

Visitors and Programs:
The Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center (AMIC) was visited by 15,245 people in 2015 (Fig 1), which comprised of 12,069 adults and 3,176 kids (Fig 2). The AMIC has had an average of nearly 19,000 visitors a year. Local visitors were more likely to just use the restrooms or show visiting friends around, while out of town visitors asked about the waste water treatment process, birds, trail access, tours and other programs. Many visitors spent time looking at the displays in the exhibit hall and several visitors came specifically to see The Friends of the Arcata Marsh (FOAM) monthly art show. Other visitors came for lectures and tours offered throughout the year. The City Recreation Department conducted marsh camps for 7 weeks with a total of 123 kids ages 4 through 9 attending.

Hours open:
The AMIC was open for 2,589.5 hours in 2015 with an average of 215 hours per month (Fig.3). Approximately 32% of that time was staffed by volunteers. Most weekend days were fully staffed 9 a.m.-5 p.m. with few closures due to lack of volunteers. City staff kept the AMIC open on week days with some volunteer help.
Volunteers:
Thirty-six volunteers contributed 628.75 hours of AMIC staffing time in 2015 and 122 hours of tour leadership throughout the year. There were 9 new volunteers acquired and trained in 2015. Milt Boyd was awarded Volunteer of the Year for AMIC staffing, leading of Saturday and special-request tours, and help at special events. Ivan Soto was also awarded Volunteer of the Year for AMIC staffing, volunteering at invasive plant workdays, and help at special events.

Tours:
FOAM conducted weekly Saturday walks and other special marsh walks. They conducted 58 regular tours for 272 participants in 2015 (Fig 4). January had the greatest number of regular tours and participants. There were 38 special requested tours given for 976 participants (Fig 5). 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 2015 was 96 tours with 1,248 participants.

Lectures and Events:
FOAM coordinated 10 presentations with 162 attendees. Subjects included fish aquaculture, cavity-nesting birds, turtles, ant behavior, forest carbon credits, & flatworms and wildlife. City of Arcata’s Forest Ecology Lecture Series covered the topics of drought, fire & tree mortality, fire management in Redwood National Park, and affects of crown structure and light on redwood trunk growth. Other events such as Godwit Days Optics Expo, Take A Child Outside Day, and the FOAM volunteer appreciation lunch took place at the AMIC.
Bookstore:
The book store did well in 2015 with sales of $12,315.80 (Fig 7), making a profit of $5,964.82. New book titles, new T-shirt designs, Jabebo recycled earrings, and Kleen Kanteen water bottles were added to the inventory. The boost in sales was likely attributed to the acquisition of new items in combination with social media publicity. The addition of the Square Register helped to process payments more efficiently and keep better track of inventory, plus added an option to now purchase a gift card to the AMIC bookstore.

Displays:
New poster displays were rotated through the plexi-glass cases: “The near-demise of Snowy Egrets due to the bird hat craze of the late 1800’s” (created by Interpretive Naturalist Gretchen O’Brien) and “The restoration of Indian Island” (created by Wiyot tribal member and HSU student Patty Torres). After an owl pellet was found outside AMIC it was placed in an enclosed petri dish with an information page about them and a magnifying glass to look at the bones. The native plant garden out in front of the AMIC was planted with donations from Lost Foods Native Plant Nursery, California Native Plant Society-North Coast Chapter, soil from the Beneficial Living Center, and plant labels purchased by FOAM. City of Arcata Environmental Services Department, Northern Humboldt Employment Services (N.H.E.S.), and FOAM volunteers helped to shape the garden by planting, building a trail, and removing non-native plants from the area. Many children’s books were donated to the reading library thanks to FOAM’s plea through the UPWIND newsletter. An American Crow nest was given to the AMIC by the HSU wildlife museum curator and sits on top of the cabinet in the lobby. Friends of the Arcata Marsh continued with the monthly art show, with a different artist every month.
Wildlife:
In 2015 192 bird species were recorded at the Arcata Marsh, 140 species in spring, 104 in summer, 165 in fall and 149 in winter. Sixty-seven species were recorded year-round. Rare sightings included White-faced Ibis, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Hammond’s Flycatcher, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Sage Thrasher, and Northern Parula. To date 330 species of birds have been reported at the Arcata Marsh according to eBird records, naming the AMWS the #1 birding hotspot in Humboldt County.

Eight reports of river otter sightings came in, most were of two otters together. All reports were submitted to the HSU otter records data website. Other mammals seen in 2015 were opossum, raccoon, striped skunk, and long-tailed weasel. Pacific chorus frog, red-legged frog, rough-skinned newt, and garter snake were also seen.

Future Plans:
Additions planned for 2016 include a new audio/visual system for presentations inside the AMIC, more temporary poster displays, and a mounted spotting scope which was generously donated by Out Of This World Optics and Nikon, Inc. Outside AMIC, an outdoor amphitheater area has been approved by the California Coastal Commission and should be under construction by the fall. This plan has been in the conceptual stage for several years and will serve as an intimate opportunity for visitors and locals to be surrounded by the marsh ecosystem during programs which may include an audio/visual presentation, fire-side storytelling, or simply a gathering place for groups to begin a tour.

Upgrades to the AMIC building have been discussed including more photovoltaic panels and a rain-catch system.