

WELCOME



Marsh Wren

The Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary is home to the City of Arcata's innovative wastewater treatment facility. By integrating conventional wastewater treatment with the natural processes of constructed wetlands, Arcata has turned wastewater into a resource.

The 307-acre sanctuary includes freshwater marshes, brackish marshes, salt marshes, tidal sloughs, mudflats, grassy uplands, a boat ramp, an Interpretive Center, and over 5 miles of walking and biking paths. The Humboldt Bay North trail, part of a 1,200 mile California Coastal Trail project, runs through the AMWS.

Located at the north end of Humboldt Bay, the Sanctuary is situated along the Pacific Flyway, a major migratory route for hundreds of thousands of birds that breed in the far north and winter in California, Mexico and Central and South America. The Arcata Marsh provides homes and migratory resting places for over 340 species of birds, with 73 year-round species. It has been designated as a National Audubon Important Bird Area.

Numerous species of plants, mammals, insects and amphibians inhabit the Sanctuary, including river otter, gray fox, raccoon, Pacific tree frog, red-legged frog, rough-skinned newt, garter snake, solitary bee, dragonfly, damselfly, ctenucha moth and swallowtail butterfly.

The Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary has received international recognition and numerous awards as a municipal planning design, a cost-effective public utility operation, a natural resource project, and for urban redevelopment.



Free guided walk – Melissa Neuffer

River Otter

FREE GUIDED WALKS

Volunteer docents lead tours of the wildlife sanctuary. No reservations are necessary for the following walks, which take place rain or shine:

Friends of the Arcata Marsh (FOAM)

- Every Saturday, 2 pm – Meet at the Interpretive Center for guided walks on various topics.
 - Last Tuesday of every month, 2 pm – Slow walk.
- www.arcatamarshfriends.org

Redwood Region Audubon Society

Every Saturday, 8:30 am – Meet in the parking lot at the foot of South I Street for a guided birding walk.

www.rras.org

Reserved Walks

Free docent-led walks on various topics are available for groups and schools if requested two weeks in advance by calling the Interpretive Center.



Western
Tiger
Swallowtail



INTERPRETIVE CENTER

The Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center has interactive interpretive exhibits, free maps and literature, a bookstore, bird lists and a log of recent bird sightings. The center is open Monday 1 to 5 pm. and Tuesday-Sunday 9 am to 5 pm.

Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center
569 South G Street • Call 707-826-2359



City of Arcata
Environmental Services Dept.
www.cityofarcata.org

MAP & GUIDE

ARCATA MARSH & WILDLIFE SANCTUARY



*Innovative, Award-winning,
Inspiring*

SEASONS

The Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary is a year-round destination for nature observation. great blue herons, great egrets and snowy egrets are easy to spot all year. Numerous species of birds, plants, mammals, insects and amphibians inhabit the Marsh. Each season reveals its own delights. The highlights listed below are but a few of the many possibilities.

Winter – Mallards, northern shovelers, northern pintails, ring-necked ducks and American wigeon often remain over winter. Virginia rails and soras may be forced out into easy viewing by seasonal tides. Surf scoters and buffleheads swim in Klopp Lake. Wintering shorebirds cover the islands in Klopp Lake at high tide. Tiny ruby-crowned kinglets flit in the trees along the paths. Black-crowned night-herons in their winter roosts are easily visible in the leafless willow trees around the Butcher's Slough Log Pond.

Spring – Purple martins, violet-green, northern rough-winged, tree, cliff and barn swallows and Vaux's swifts return in the spring, swooping over the marshes. Rufous and Allen's hummingbirds compete with the year-round resident Anna's Hummingbirds at red-flowering currant bushes. Pacific tree frogs can be seen and heard around the Marsh.

Yellow-rumped warblers are easily viewed in the trees.

Summer – A family of river otters may be seen in any body of water. Marsh wrens, red-winged blackbirds and song sparrows sing from the cattails. Keep an eye out for broods of mallard, cinnamon teal and wood ducklings. Dragonflies and Swallowtail Butterflies fill the air. Observe brown pelicans diving into Klopp Lake for a meal. Watch for garter snakes sunning on the paths.

Fall – Peregrine falcons, northern harriers, red-tailed hawks, red-shouldered hawks and white-tailed kites are readily seen. With luck you can spot an osprey or even a bald eagle. Flocks of cedar waxwings visit. Fall color shows up in the salt marsh as slender pickleweed turns red. Purple California asters bloom along with white Queen Anne's lace. Watch for migrating warblers, shorebirds and ducks.

Cover: Great Blue Heron, Purple Finch

HISTORY

1949 – First wastewater treatment plant discharged primary-treated effluent into Arcata Bay.

1957 – Oxidation ponds constructed.

1966 – Chlorination added to treatment system.

1969 – Wastewater aquaculture project was started by Humboldt State University Professor, Dr. George Allen. Pacific Salmon and Cutthroat Trout were raised in a mixture of partially treated wastewater and seawater.

1970 – Main parking lot and boat ramp constructed on South I Street.

1974 – New California State policy prohibited discharge of wastewater into bays and estuaries unless "enhancement" was proven.

1975 – Humboldt Bay Wastewater Authority proposed a regional wastewater treatment plant at an initial estimated cost of \$25 million.

1978 – Arcata citizens rallied for an integrated wastewater treatment plant that would utilize the natural treatment processes of marshes.

1979 – The State authorized Arcata to demonstrate "enhancement" with a two-year pilot project of a 10-cell marsh, which treated 10% of Arcata's wastewater.

1979 – Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary Task Force formed to oversee public usage of Arcata's wetland areas and plan new projects.

1981 – Original Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary covering 75 acres along South I Street completed.

1983 – State Water Resources Control Board permitted Arcata to upgrade its wastewater treatment plant, including wetland treatment enhancement units.



Wood Duck



Lesser Goldfinch

Allen's Hummingbird



1986 – With completion of Butcher's Slough Wetlands Restoration Project, funded by California Coastal Conservancy, Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary boundaries are expanded to 154 acres.

1987 – Out of more than 1,100 entries, Arcata received the "Innovations in Government" Award from Ford Foundation/Harvard University Kennedy School of Government and \$100,000 to build the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center.

1989 – Non-profit organization, Friends of the Arcata Marsh (FOAM) was formed and raised \$56,000 locally to help build the Interpretive Center.

1993 – Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center opened.

1998 – The City of Arcata obtained funds to purchase 75 acres of diked agricultural lands located to the west of the sanctuary.

2003 – Butcher's Slough Enhancement completed on City-acquired lands north of the Log Pond.

2004 – South I Street Pond constructed.

2007 – McDaniel Slough Project to cooperatively restore and enhance up to 250 acres of former tide lands begun.

2013 – McDaniel South Project completed, including breaching dikes, removing tidegates, and restoring connectivity to Janes Creek.



Brown Pelican

Design & most photos – Leslie Scopes Anderson

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The Arcata Marsh is a component of the City’s wastewater treatment facility. Serving a population of over 17,000, a series of ingeniously constructed ponds treat the water naturally with less reliance on chemicals. This unique system has been the model for similar facilities worldwide. The wastewater system’s components are:

Headworks – The headworks is the first phase in the treatment of the City’s sewage. Two Archimedes screw pumps lift the sewage 15 feet. It flows through a bar screen to remove sticks, debris, sand, gravel and other gritty materials that are taken to the landfill. From the headworks the sewage flows to the clarifiers.

Clarifiers – Two large tanks called clarifiers are used to separate organic solids and skim off materials from the wastewater. The primary-treated wastewater that results from settling, or clarifying, flows to the oxidation ponds. The solids (sludge) that settle out in the bottom of the clarifiers are pumped to the digesters.

Digesters – In the digesters, sludge from the clarifiers is heated, stirred and decomposed by bacteria. The digesters are anaerobic because the bacteria decompose or digest the sludge without using oxygen. Bacteria in the digesters convert some of the ingredients in the sludge into methane gas, which is used to heat the digesters.

Sludge Drying Beds – Digested sludge, which has the consistency of pudding, is drained from the digester to covered drying beds and dried in the open air. Once dry, the sludge is mixed with chipped wood waste and marsh plants that are harvested from the marshes. This mixture is then aerobically (with oxygen) composted and used in Arcata’s natural areas and parks.

Oxidation Ponds – Wastewater from the clarifiers flows by gravity to the oxidation ponds. Bacteria and other microorganisms in the ponds break down, or digest, the waste in the sewage. Algae in the ponds provide oxygen for the bacteria. Additional oxygen is supplied mechanically by machines called aerators. Since algae and bacteria become pollutants when they die, it is important to remove them from the wastewater before it is sent to the bay.

Treatment Marshes – Bullrush and cattails in the four small treatment marshes shade the water so algae cannot grow. These plants slow the flow of wastewater, allowing suspended pollutants to sink to the bottom. These plants also provide habitat for bacteria, fungi and other microorganisms that feed on and further break down pollutants in the wastewater. Three larger freshwater treatment marshes (Allen, Gearheart and Hauser) were constructed to further remove suspended materials and pollutants from the wastewater, while providing habitat for wildlife.

Chlorine Contact Basin – Wastewater is treated with chlorine to kill pathogens, harmful bacteria and viruses. Sulfur dioxide is used to remove the chlorine before the water is discharged into the bay.

Northern Shoveler



Great Egret



Red-flowering Currant

POINTS OF INTEREST

Allen Marsh – Allen Marsh was built on an abandoned log deck. This marsh was named for HSU Fisheries Professor George Allen, who operated an aquaculture project, raising salmon and trout in a mixture of wastewater and bay water. This concept of wastewater as a resource was instrumental in the development of the Arcata Marsh & Wildlife Sanctuary.

Gearheart Marsh – Named for HSU Environmental Resources Engineering Professor Robert Gearheart, this marsh was previously pasture land. Dr. Gearheart’s Marsh Pilot Project demonstrated to the state that wetlands were a viable way to treat wastewater.

Hauser Marsh – This marsh was once a leachate basin. It is named for a former Arcata City Council member, Mayor and City Manager, Dan Hauser, who worked tirelessly persuading the state to let Arcata proceed with the integrated wetland wastewater treatment plant.

Mount Trashmore – In 1964 this grassy hill was the site of the County sanitary landfill which was sealed in 1973.

Klopp Lake – Originally a leachate basin for the landfill, this lake is now popular for birdwatching and picnicking. It is named for the former Arcata City Public Works Director Franklin Klopp, who was instrumental in the creation of the Marsh.

Old Arcata Wharf – These pilings are remnants of California’s first railroad, the Union Plank Walk and Rail Track Company. Built in 1855, the wharf and horse-drawn railroad ran two miles into the bay.

Butcher’s Slough – This tidally-influenced portion of Jolly Giant Creek was restored in 1986. The numerous pilings once supported a plywood mill.

Log Pond – This pond was once a place where logs were stored before being milled. It has been transformed into a productive freshwater pond.

No-Name Pond – This developed naturally in a low-lying area. At the prompting of his students, HSU Ornithology Professor Stanley Harris called it “No-Name Pond.” The City officially adopted the name in 2001 to honor Dr. Harris’ work in local ornithology and wetland ecology.

Pilot Project – These ten 20’ x 200’ marshes were used to demonstrate to the state the effectiveness of wetlands for treating wastewater.

Restored Tidal Habitat – 90% of the original salt marsh areas around Humboldt Bay have been either diked or filled. In 2013, the City and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife completed restoration of 250 acres of salt marsh in the McDaniel Slough Estuary.

Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center – Constructed with a grant from the Ford Foundation and fundraising efforts by Friends of the Arcata Marsh, the center opened in 1993. Interactive exhibits provide information on the history and operation of the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary, as well as the wildlife that lives there.

Stormwater Treatment Marsh – Stormwater runoff slows as it enters this marsh. Here, solids settle and microorganisms remove pollutants before the water enters Butcher’s Slough and Humboldt Bay.

Humboldt Bay Trail North – This section of the ADA accessible multi-use non-motorized California Coastal Trail winds through the Arcata Marsh & Wildlife Sanctuary and along the edge of Humboldt Bay alongside highway 101.

Outdoor Amphitheater – The bench seating and fire ring offer an outdoor setting for nature programs near the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center.