

FRIENDS of FAMOSA SLOUGH



A California Non-Profit Corporation



Box 87280, San Diego, CA 92138-7280

FALL 2019 NEWSLETTER

2019 General Meeting and Program

Wednesday, November 20, 7:00 PM

“Wetland Restoration at Lake Apopka, Florida”

Speaker: David Walker

David will be speaking about his work at the St. Johns River Water Management District at Lake Apopka in Florida. He was Basin Program Manager for the Upper Ocklawaha River and Lake Apopka Restoration Program, located northwest of Orlando.

The presentation will review the agricultural history of Lake Apopka, restoration efforts and science, how the restoration was completed, and the successful re-establishment of birds and other wildlife.

These programs include restoration of over 45,000 acres of wetland habitat and 60,000 acres of lakes that form the headwaters of the Ocklawaha River. A section of this restored area is now the number one eBird hotspot in the state of Florida with 353 recorded species. (See the eBird.org website for ‘hotspots.’)

There will also be an update on Famosa Slough’s latest news.

The public is invited.

Light refreshments will be provided.

**Location — Loma Riviera Condominium
Clubhouse, 3115 Loma Riviera Drive**

Directions: From West Point Loma Boulevard, one long block west of Midway Drive and Sports Arena Drive, turn north at Loma Riviera Drive (at the Riviera Liquor House), and proceed a couple short blocks to the clubhouse on the right. Parking is on the street and in visitor spaces.

Shaw’s Agave in Bloom at the Slough

by David Kimball

In the spring of 2019, the Slough experienced the blooming of a Shaw’s Agave (*Agave shawii*). This species of agave is native along the coast in Mexico with a range that extends into southern San Diego County. This plant is on the mound at the corner of West Point Loma Boulevard and Famosa Boulevard.

Shaw’s Agaves are slow growing and flower after about 20 years of growth, and, as is common among all agave species, die following the bloom. Around the base of most plants are young suckers (called pups) that will survive to create new plants. The plants at the Slough were obtained as pups from a garden in Ocean Beach in 2010. The mother plant was about six feet in diameter, and the pups weighed from 10 to 50 pounds each. Half of the 15 that were donated were planted at the Slough; the other half went to the Sunset Cliffs Natural Park restoration area.



The flowers of Shaw’s Agave attract insects that are often foraged by bats. Color photo is by Beth Swersie.

Bench in Honor of Rose Hanscom

by David Kimball

We have a fine new bench at the viewpoint along Famosa Boulevard, just south of West Point Loma Boulevard. The students at **Francis Parker School** contributed it to honor their teacher, **Rose Hanscom**, upon her retirement. The bench is in a perfect location for relaxing and enjoying the scenery of the Slough, or partaking in bird watching or nature photography.

Rose, who has been described by students as the most loving and warm person that you will ever learn science from, took many of her AP Environmental classes for field trips to the Slough over the years to study coastal wetlands and their wildlife.

Since her retirement, Rose still helps with events at Francis Parker and helps maintain newly planted native vegetation at the Slough.



Rose Hanscom and Barbara and Jim Peugh

The Friends of Famosa Slough (FFS) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established to protect and restore Famosa Slough as a natural wetland preserve and to promote public awareness of the importance of wetlands. The City of San Diego purchased the Slough in September 1990. The City's Park and Recreation Department manages it.

The City's contact is the **Mission Bay Senior Park Ranger**, phone 858/581-7602.

Police non-emergency number is 619/531-2000.

FFS Contact Information: Phone 619/224-4591 or Email info@famosaslough.org.

For more information about the Friends, see the FFS web site: <https://www.FamosaSlough.org> and FFS Facebook page, www.facebook.com/FamosaSlough.

Species Highlight: Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

by Lesley Handa

The recent Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, *Nyctanassa violacea*, sightings are a special treat for visitors to Famosa Slough. Historically, this species has been scarcely sighted across San Diego County as it mostly occurs on the east coast in the US.

Worldwide, the population of Yellow-crowned Night-Heron is stable; however, the species is endangered in Indiana, threatened in Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Kentucky, and is recognized as a species of special concern in Virginia. Sightings in recent years across the county have been more frequent, and for the first time, breeding was confirmed near Famosa Slough earlier this year.



Yellow-crowned Night-Heron
Photo by Mike Chapin

The species is easily distinguished from the Black-crowned Night-Heron due to its more slender neck, with a striking contrast of the white to black head and yellow crown. In flight, the legs stretch behind the tail, unlike the legs of the Black-crowned Night-Heron that are less prominent in flight. It takes 3-4 years to reach maturity and sub-adults can be difficult to differentiate from the Black-crowned Night-Heron at this time. Observers should look for a slender body, darker overall plumage, a mostly black bill in comparison to the dark mandible and green to yellowish lower mandible of the Black-crowned Night-Heron. Finally, the higher-pitched vocalization should identify the species compared to the "kwalk" of the Black-crowned Night-Heron.

The Yellow-crowned Night-Heron is only one of two night-herons found in the United States with the other being the Black-crowned Night-Heron. Although seen during the day by many birders, true to its namesake, the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron is nocturnal and forages mainly on crabs and crustaceans. Sightings at Famosa Slough have frequently been on the Channel side of the slough alongside Black-crowned Night-Herons and in the northwest corner of Famosa Slough.

Urban Corps Work at Famosa Slough

by Jim Peugh

For eight days, between September 17 and October 3, a team of eight **Urban Corps of San Diego County** workers helped us catch up with many tasks at the Slough. **SDG&E** funded the work with their **Environmental Champions** grant awarded to the Urban Corps. The Urban Corps provides education and work experience for the Corps members. They also provide a full range of equipment for the students to use and learn about.

The Corps members started by removing a huge non-native acacia that was taking over part of the east side of the Slough. It was big enough, dry enough, and close enough to Point Loma Tennis Club buildings that we worried it was a potential fire risk. After cutting it down, they took the branches to a 40-foot dumpster in the Valeta Street Parking lot. The dumpster was there from the Coastal Cleanup the week before, thanks to **I Love a Clean San Diego**.

They also replaced 36 broken trail edge posts mainly along the trail parallel to West Point Loma Boulevard and around the bench at the northeast corner of the Valeta Street treatment ponds. As usual, the large number of rocks and concrete that have been dumped into the upland around the Slough made digging the post holes very difficult, whether with powered augers or with hand tools. **Dixieline Lumber and Home Center, Sports Arena**, donated materials that were used in the effort. Our newest Board member, **Leon Scales**, did a huge amount of work on logistics, including identifying fence posts that needed replacement, preparing the new posts, coordinating with Dixieline, and performing many other logistic tasks.

They trimmed and removed saltbush and invasive plants that were taking over parts of the vegetated areas of the Slough and were encroaching on some trails. They removed a lot of the bougainvillea and widened the north end of the trail on the north side of West Point Loma Boulevard. It had become very narrow as the native plants grew. That filled a second 40-foot dumpster that the City provided.

The grant also included two events with students from **Correia Middle School's AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) Program**. Ms. Tara Jean's 7th and 8th grade students helped with loading the dumpster and cutting back excessive saltbush.

The Slough provided the Corps members with lots of good wildlife views and opportunities to learn about native plants and animals, and wetlands in general. We greatly appreciate the generous grant from SDG&E, the work of the Urban Corps members and staff, and the materials contributed by Dixieline.

2019 Science Fair Winner

by David Kimball

Caroline Worman, an 8th grade student at **The Rhodes School**, received the Friends of Famosa Slough award for her **2019 Greater San Diego Science and Engineering Fair** project. Her Project was entitled "The Effectiveness of Eco-Friendly Filters on Escondido Creek Water Quality." She sampled water and filtered it through layers of manganese sand with differing flow rates. She then measured the filtered water and compared the measurement of chemical content with the original water samples. Caroline received a grant of \$100 to support her studies, and is now an honorary member of Friends of Famosa Slough.



Caroline Worman at the 2019 Science Fair

Eagle Scout Project at Famosa Slough

by Jim Peugh

In another recent improvement, **Henry Niewiadomski** completed an Eagle Scout project at the Slough. A low block retaining wall stabilizes a steep slope just north of Montalvo Street. It significantly improves the trail toward Montalvo and substantially reduces the potential for erosion there.



Henry Niewiadomski, October 2019

The project will eventually provide a foundation for a more convenient permanent trail. Henry organized the logistics and construction extremely well. Members of **Troop 15** assisted him to finish in one day, although he scheduled it for two days.

MEMBERSHIP IN FRIENDS OF FAMOSA SLOUGH

NAME(S) _____ PHONE _____
 ADDRESS _____ E-MAIL* _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

____ *Please send future newsletters and notices via email.

____ FULL MEMBERSHIP. Yes! I/We support the goals of FFS and submit \$10.00 annual dues. \$ _____

____ ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP. Yes! I/We support the goals of FFS and wish to be counted.

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION: \$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____

I/We volunteer to: ____ assist with administrative tasks, ____ clean up around Slough, ____ help with educational activities,
 ____ distribute flyers, ____ assist in park planning, ____ collect environmental data/do research, ____ assist in special events,
 ____ anything. Other pertinent skills: _____



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

GENERAL MEETING AND PROGRAM

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 at Lake Apopka, Florida “**

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 3115 Loma Riviera Drive • San Diego 92110**

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UPCOMING EVENTS

WORK PARTIES

2nd Saturday of odd-numbered months —
 November 9, January 11, March 14, May 9, etc.
 Meet at 9:00 AM at the intersection of West Point Loma and Famosa Boulevards - **Volunteers needed!**

RSVP to info@FamosaSlough.org

NATURE WALKS

3rd Saturday of every month —
 November 16, December 21, January 18, February 15, etc.
 Meet at 1:00 PM near the kiosk on Famosa Blvd., south of West Point Loma Blvd. - **Beginners welcome!**

**Map Location: W. Pt. Loma Blvd. & Famosa Blvd.,
 San Diego, CA 92107**