

FRIENDS of FAMOSA SLOUGH



A California Non-Profit Corporation



Box 87280, San Diego, CA 92138-7280

FALL/WINTER 2018-2019 NEWSLETTER

Research Presentations at High Tech High

by Lesley Handa



On October 23, 2018, students at High Tech High under the direction of science teacher Kalle Palmer presented research projects about Famosa Slough. Several FFS Board members attended to observe the presentations and ask questions about the research projects.

Each group was composed of three to four students who worked together on a project including project design, field data collection from several visits to the slough, and a summary of results. Presentations of research topics included climate change, water and air quality, identification of microfauna, macrofauna and mammals, and ethnobotany. Students mentioned several times that the unexpected field condition of rain at the beginning of October potentially affected the results.

Overall, this was a great opportunity for students to practice the scientific method to investigate the natural resources at Famosa Slough, and the diversity of projects were informative. Here is to a great job to the students of **High Tech High!**



“The Mission Bay Conservation Action Plan” and “The Marvels of Bird Migration”

by Lesley Handa and Megan Flaherty

This year’s General meeting will feature two topics including an update on the Mission Bay Conservation Action Plan by **Megan Flaherty** of **San Diego Audubon Society** and presentation about bird migration by **Lesley Handa** of **Handa Ornithology Lab**. Both Megan and Lesley are FFS Board Members.

Prior to the creation of Mission Bay into a man-made waterpark in the 1950’s, Mission Bay, the San Diego River and Famosa Slough were once a part of the historic wetland known as False Bay. Despite large-scale alterations and development, Mission Bay remains a vital resource for birds and other wildlife. San Diego Audubon has supported conservation planning and restoration efforts in Mission Bay for decades - from maintaining nesting sites for the California Least Tern to creating a plan to restore and protect the last-remaining wetlands. An update about the Conservation Action Plan for Mission Bay, a 2014 planning document that laid the groundwork for ReWild Mission Bay and other conservation projects will be provided during the talk.

See “The Marvels of Bird Migration” introduction on page 2.

Save the date:

2018 General Meeting at 7:00 PM

Wednesday, December 5

Megan Flaherty of **San Diego Audubon Society** will speak about The Mission Bay Conservation Action Plan and **Lesley Handa** of **Handa Ornithology Lab** will speak about the Marvels of Bird Migration.

The public is invited.

Light refreshments will be provided.

Location — Loma Riviera Condominium Clubhouse, 3115 Loma Riviera Drive
(Directions on back page.)

The Marvels of Bird Migration

by Lesley Handa

This article is a preview for the talk at the general meeting on December 5th.

Although some bird species are seen year-round at Famosa Slough, migration plays a vital role for species that stopover during different seasons. Without any thought about migration here in San Diego, birds seem to magically appear. With further investigation, migration provides a fascinating and complex story from the physiological changes taking place in the body, long distances traveled, and protections across geographical boundaries.

It is common knowledge that species build up fat stores before embarking on migration. However, research on the Red Knot *Calidris canutus* has allowed us to delve further into the details of complex internal physiological changes that take place. Prior to migration, the stomach, intestines and leg muscles all shrink while



Red Knot Group by MJ Kilpatrick

the size of flight muscles and the heart increase – all of which contributes towards maximizing flight ability!



Machi the Whimbrel by Barry Truitt

Depending on the species, migration can be thousands of miles or less. Some species migrate over the course of a few days or even in a single day such as the diminutive 3 gram (a nickel weighs 4.5 grams), Ruby-throated Hummingbird *Archilochus colubris*. This species migrates non-stop for 20 hours traveling 500 miles across the Gulf of Mexico to Florida for the winter. Weather plays a vital role in migration, and if unfavorable, can be an obstacle. If there is a storm, birds have to exert more effort during flight or could potentially be blown entirely off course and end up in unexpected locations.

As birds do not recognize the boundaries of countries like humans, coordination of protection across multiple countries is vital toward conservation in migratory species of birds. Thanks to Machi, quite possibly the most famous Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* in the world, and the researchers at the College of William and Mary, we learn why this was important. For several years while Machi carried a backpack satellite transmitter, we learned about the migratory route of Whimbrels, including that sometimes they fly into hurricanes! Machi's story tragically ended after being shot by hunters for sport in Guadaloupe in the Caribbean. This brought to light the need to update hunting restrictions in the Caribbean and the importance of protections across borders towards the conservation of migratory birds.

So the next time you observe our seasonal residents at Famosa Slough, remember that there might have been many things that took place prior to arrival at the slough!

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.**

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

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

The Restoration of Famosa Slough

by David Kimball



The area prior to construction, July 2005

The restoration of Famosa Slough has been guided by the 1993 Famosa Slough Enhancement Plan. That report surveyed the site, documented the vegetation and animals, and noted various aspects of the water and terrain. It made many recommendations for restoration including the trail system, correction of water runoff problems, and replacement of non-native plants by suitable native species.



Digging the channel

A major recommendation made by the report was to dig a channel adjacent to West Point Loma Boulevard that would increase wetland area and allow for circular flow of water. This, it was expected, would lessen the growth of algae on the east side of the slough and consequently improve the use of the slough by birds and fish.

The Friends obtained a Proposition 13 Grant for \$347,000 from the California Regional Water Quality Control Board and a \$47,000 Fish and Wildlife Service Grant to create this channel and thereby improve the Slough as a wetland habitat and a natural park. In 2005, Merkel and Associates began digging out the channel. The area where

the channel was to be had been used for dumping construction rubble from the adjacent dwellings. Most of the concrete and asphalt was trucked away for disposal, and the remaining material was shaped into mounds. Subsequent to the grading, the area was planted with native species.



Overview of WPL Restoration Project, November 2005

The soil that created the mounds was highly saline, and so the establishment of upland vegetation has been slow. Each year as salt has been leached from the soil by rain the plants have shown better growth. The marsh area was allowed to develop naturally and now is fully populated with native plants. The algae growth has been much less of a problem since the completion of the channel.



Shaping the channel



The channel in November 2018

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: _____



PO Box 87280, San Diego, CA 92138-7280

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

GENERAL MEETING AND PROGRAM

7:00 PM, Wednesday, December 5

**Megan Flaherty of San Diego Audubon Society
 Lesley Handa of Handa Ornithology Lab**

***“ReWild Mission Bay” and
 “The Marvels of Bird Migration”***

**Loma Riviera Condominium Clubhouse
 3115 Loma Riviera Drive • San Diego 92110**

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 visitors spaces.

UPCOMING EVENTS

WORK PARTIES

2nd Saturday of odd-numbered months — January 12, March 9, May 11, July 13, September 14, 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 — December 15, January 19, February 16, March 16, April 20, May 18, 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**