



A Letter from Robin...

On December 31st I stepped down as Executive Director of the Yolo Basin Foundation, and Martha Ozonoff took my place. I am very proud of the fact that Yolo Basin Foundation is a healthy organization with a dedicated staff and board and a promising 3-year fundraising campaign underway. This means that at 25 years in operation, the founding executive director can move on.

We all have accomplished a lot in 25 years. There are many reasons that we were successful in realizing our dream of restoring an important link in the chain of wetlands that make up the Pacific Flyway. Some of the circumstances we had control over, and sometimes the stars magically lined up. In 1990 that's what happened. The right people were there to support a bold idea that was to become the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area.

Vic Fazio was our congressman. Tom Hannigan was our state assemblyman and John Garamendi was our state senator. Betsy Marchand and Helen Thomson were on the Yolo County Board of Supervisors. Lois Wolk was on the Davis City Council. Pete Bontadelli was Director of CA Department of Fish and Wildlife. Sid England worked for UC Davis Chancellor Vanderhoef. Richard Harris was Vic's District Director. In 1990 the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture had just set up their office in Sacramento and Dave Paullin was their Executive Director.

Steve Chainey, Ted Beedy, Susan Sanders, Terry Colborn, John Kemper and Paul Sim-

mons were already years ahead of me with their knowledge of wetlands, birds, habitat restoration, and endangered species law, and they pushed the project forward.

In 1989 Susan and I had filed the incorporation papers for Putah Creek Council. One year later we were at it again for a new non-profit named Yolo Basin Foundation. We wrote newsletter articles, membership appeals, thank you letters, and press releases while our sons played on the floor.

We did this together. We changed our community. We repaired our small corner of the world. We made a wonderful place for birds and people that will be here forever.

No one accomplishes something as big as the Wildlife Area alone. It takes supportive family and friends to sustain an effort like this. I will always be so grateful to Ann Brice, my friend and colleague for over 20 years. Yolo Basin Foundation is a product of her hard work, dedication, wisdom and creativity. Our shared sense of humor kept us laughing as we sat at adjacent desks for 15 years.

Bill Julian is my husband of 28 years and he is also my mentor. He introduced me to the local elected officials, encouraged me when I was tired and gave me advice when I was at a loss. I learned the importance of one-page talking points to bring to meetings with elected officials from him. And he made thousands of cups of tea and hundreds of meals for the many people at meetings in our kitchen. Our children David, Leah and Sarah were always willing to do the things that make a grassroots



Photo credit: Leah Julian

Bill and Robin enjoying retirement.

organization successful: lick stamps, fold letters and seal envelopes, and sell raffle tickets. They were volunteers before they knew what the word meant.

It takes dedicated partners – DFW Wildlife Area managers Dave Feliz and Jeff Stoddard are the best. I've enjoyed working and laughing with both of them and I've learned so much.

I've had the good fortune to work with 69 different board members. They have generously donated their time, their expertise and their money to make our vision a reality. At least 22 of them attended *Bucks for Ducks* this year.

Over the past 25 years I've been fortunate to work with 32 different staff people. No one

—continued on p. 2



Photo credit: Ann Burris

Letter from Robin continued from p. 1

worked with me because of the money. Everyone did it because we had shared values. They all did whatever it took to start and grow programs. They scheduled volunteers and taught outside on hot days, windy days and cold days. At *Bucks for Ducks* this year they showed us once again that they have the skills and imagination to put on a party for over 600 people. 65,000 students discovered the wetlands because of their love and dedication. And more will in the future. I can't thank them enough.

Then there are the hundreds of volunteers, probably several thousand, who gave so generously of their time. The dedication of so many inspired and energized me. Phyllis Zerger was one of our first volunteers. She was the editor of our first newsletter and she and her husband Darrel are still volunteering, over two decades later! Together Phyllis and I have 24 *Bucks for Ducks* years between us. Darrel cleans and repairs hundreds of pairs of binoculars every year for the school children. Dedication like theirs is more than inspiring!

I am so happy, relieved, and thankful to the board for finding my replacement, Martha Ozonoff. In 1998, Martha, Cheryl Chipman and I organized a tree planting day on the Wildlife Area. I don't remember how many volunteers showed up but we planted 4,000 trees that day. She's been in the office for three months, and it's clear that she has the skills and sense of humor to sustain and grow Yolo Basin Foundation.

I'm not leaving Yolo Basin Foundation entirely. I'll be serving as policy director starting after Bill and I spend one month traveling in Ecuador and Costa Rica. As policy director I'll monitor plans for the Yolo Bypass. There are plans for expanding the Bypass to increase flood protection and for improving adult salmon passage upstream and rearing habitat for young salmon moving downstream. I will assist the board in keeping the values of balanced land use, including flood protection, wetland habitat, agriculture, and public use in the forefront of any planning efforts.

As John Stewart said last summer, "It's time to give someone else the opportunity to do this great job." Thank you for 25 amazing years. 🌱

Sign Up for Summer Camp



Desmond Bell and his dad busy at camp.

Yolo Basin Foundation is again offering day camp for incoming 1st through 4th graders this summer. Below are descriptions of the two camps to be held:

Summer Discover Series

Yolo Basin Foundation's education staff and docents will once again be leading a series of evening programs this summer. Sessions will take place at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Demonstration Wetlands, behind the Headquarters, the perfect location to discover wetlands through hands-on, interactive and

inquiry-based activities for students entering 1st or 2nd grade in the fall. Register for one or all five outdoor sessions. One adult family member (no siblings) is required to attend with their student (no additional donation). There is a \$10.00 donation per student requested.

- Session Times: 6 pm – 8 pm
- Session Dates: June 13, June 20, June 27, July 11, July 18

Discover the Wetlands Summer Camp

Join *Discover the Flyway* staff and docents for our five-day summer camp program for children entering 3rd or 4th grade. Campers will explore the world of wetlands through different outdoor science themes each day including water, soil and animal adaptations. They will participate in outdoor activity stations, create art and listen to stories in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Demonstration Wetlands. Camp size is limited to 12 participants. The suggested donation is \$90 for Yolo Basin Foundation members and \$115 for non-members.

- Session Times: 9 am – 12 pm
- Session Dates: July 25th through 29th

Pre-registration is required, so mark your calendars for April 1st when registration will open on our website at www.yolobasin.org. For more information contact Heidi Satter hsatter@yolobasin.org 🌱

YBF Upcoming Events

Flyway Nights Speaker Series

- Thursday, February 4, 7pm
The Nature Conservancy's BirdReturns Program
- Thursday, March 3, 7pm
The Buzz About Native Bees and Vernal Pool Flowers

Discover the Flyway Teacher Workshop

- Saturday, January 30, 9am-4pm

Public Tours of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area

- Saturday, February 13, 9am-noon
- Saturday, March 12, 9am-noon

Public Tours of the City of Davis Wetlands

- Saturday, February 6, 3-5pm
- Saturday, March 5, 9-11pm

CA Duck Days Festival

- Reception – Friday, Feb. 19
- Festival – Saturday, Feb. 20

25th Anniversary Campaign Update


Yolo Basin Foundation is thrilled to have successfully completed the first year of our 25th Anniversary Campaign: *Vision for the Flyway!* During our 25th anniversary year, over 350 individuals and organizations contributed more than \$500,000 as part of this three-year fundraising campaign. Thank you for making a significant and long-lasting investment in our children and our community.

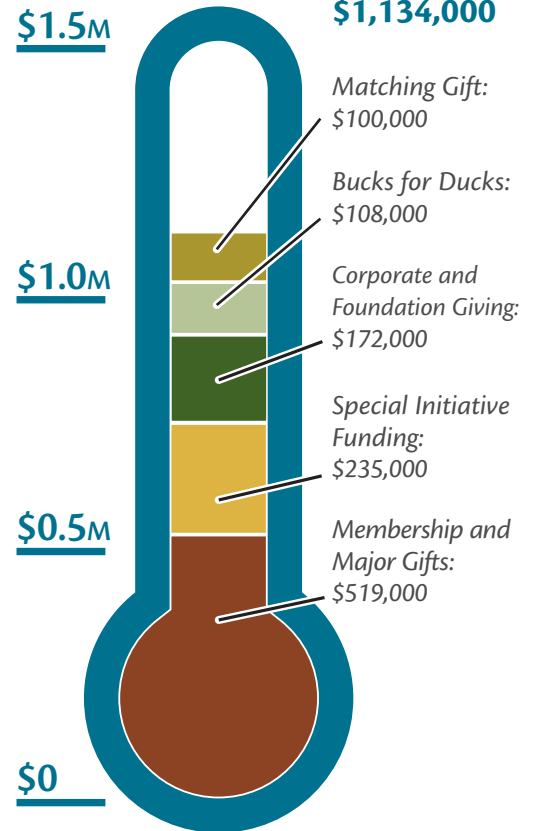
The 25th Anniversary Campaign celebrates the beauty and inspiration of the Vic Fazio Yolo Wildlife Area and ensures that Yolo Basin Foundation's programs and public policy work flourish for the next 25 years and beyond. The Campaign will create new initiatives and provide critical funding that:

- Improves and sustains programs such as *Discover the Flyway*, our hands on K-12 education program
- Expands outreach and education programs to even more underserved schools
- Establishes a new graduate student fellowship program

- Develops new opportunities for the community to experience the beauty of the wetlands
- Supports strong leadership to address complex resource management issues in the Yolo Bypass

A \$100,000 gift made by an anonymous local donor provided a unique opportunity to double the impact of campaign gifts made during 2015. All new and increased membership contributions were matched dollar for dollar. Thank you so much to all of you who helped us meet this very ambitious matching gift goal!

As you can see, we have made incredible progress toward our \$1.5 million goal. However, we have an additional \$366,000 to raise during the next two years of the campaign. Please join us in creating a lasting impact on Pacific Flyway wetlands and environmental education and support the 25th Anniversary Campaign: *Vision for the Flyway*. For more information or to contribute visit www.yolobasin.org. 



Yolo Basin Foundation Graduate Student Fellowship

To recognize the Yolo Basin Foundation's 25th anniversary and to honor its founder Robin Kulakow, the Kulakow-Julian Family has established the "Yolo Basin Foundation Graduate Student Fellowship Fund." "We wanted to do something meaningful and lasting for YBF as well as recognize Robin's efforts in environmental education and conservation at the Wildlife Area over the years," said Bill Julian, Robin's husband and long time champion of YBF. The gift will provide support for selected graduate students from University of California, Davis and California State University, Sacramento who are working in the areas of environmental education, environmental sciences, or environmental/conservation policy.


The Fellowship includes an annual stipend, as well as mentoring, for the student's research. Each fellowship will be overseen by a committee of professionals in the selected research field appointed by the YBF Board of Directors. Recipients will be required to give monthly reports on their research and, at the end of the fellowship, provide a written final report and make a presentation of their findings.

The 2016 award will go to a student or students doing graduate research that is directly related to the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area or the larger Yolo Bypass. The amount of the stipend will range from \$5,000 to \$15,000 annually. Applicants have until January 31, 2016 to apply, and the winner(s) will be selected by March 1, 2016.

Potential research topics:

- Environmental science related to wetlands ecology, restoration or management, pasture, rice production, vernal pools, water quality, or biology of wetland related plant/animal species
- Environmental education, evaluating an aspect of the *Discover the Flyway* program
- Policy research related to long-term resource management at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area or the larger Yolo Bypass

Fellowship application requirements:

- A written application
- A description of the proposed project including statement of purpose, research methods, schedule, brief budget and how it will benefit resources in the Yolo Bypass (500 words or less)
- One letter of recommendation from a professor overseeing the research project
- College transcripts, including those from the graduate program
- Proof of university enrollment
- Those interested in applying, may email robin@yolobasin.org for more details and an application form. 

Thank you to the 25th Anniversary Campaign Supporters

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(\$10,000-\$24,999)

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Yes, There Are Fish at the Wildlife Area

by Corky Quirk, Program Coordinator

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area (YBWA) sits in the largest contiguous floodplain area of the lower Sacramento River and provides seasonal and permanent aquatic habitat for 44 species of fish, eight of which are special-status. "In the ditches open to the river you can catch just about any fish in the Delta including salmon, sturgeon, striped bass



Photo credit: Cathy Krutzer

Double-crested Cormorant with a large challenge!

and trout," says Jeff Stoddard, YBWA Manager. The Yolo Bypass benefits many species of native fishes, particularly in flood years.

Approximately 95 percent of Central Valley floodplain habitat has been altered and drained for agriculture. Rice is the primary agricultural crop grown in the Wildlife Area. It is flooded during the winter and offers an insect buffet for juvenile fish including salmon after flood events. The area also provides vital fish spawning, rearing, and migratory habitat for a diverse array of native and nonnative fish species.

Research continues on young salmon found in the Yolo Bypass after the Fremont Weir has over-topped. These fish reach the Sacramento River once again as the flood waters recede. They are larger and healthier than the young fish that travel directly down the Sacramento River. Scientists and policy makers are looking at ways to increase the time that young salmon spend in the Bypass after flood events as a way of improving the numbers of salmon that survive and return to spawn in the Sacramento River watershed.

Adult fall run Chinook salmon travel up Putah Creek from the Toe Drain which is connected to the Delta near Prospect Island. This year scientists counted at least 500 salmon that traveled up the Creek in search of spawning gravels. The last mile of Putah Creek runs through the YBWA. Department of Fish and Wildlife managers work in cooperation with the Solano County Water Agency to coordinate removal of the Los Rios check dam, located on the YBWA, with the release of water from the dam in order to recruit salmon moving up the Toe Drain as mandated in the Putah Creek Accord.

When the Wildlife Area floods, fish are sometimes trapped in the ditches and canals. Also fish can be pulled into the large canals as water is pumped from the Toe Drain. Fishing and bow fishing are allowed in YBWA. The most popular places to fish include the Toe Drain at Parking Lot F, Putah Creek, Greens Lake, the Cross Canal and the larger ditches and deeper ponds.

Most common fish in the ponds and ditches include a group of fish often called "panfish". A panfish is an edible game fish that usually doesn't outgrow the size of a frying pan. In the Wildlife Area these include green sunfish, blue gill, black bass, and crappie. Stoddard says, "I always see a big uptick in fishermen when the crappie are running. Seems pretty popular." Most panfish are in the sunfish family and are nest-building carnivores.

Channel catfish are common in Putah Creek and are sometimes seen in the larger ditches, but the most numerous species in the ditches is common carp. The large Cross Canal and the ditch running parallel to the air strip are frequented by people fishing for carp. Carp is the only fish that may be taken by bowfishing.

Greens Lake is popular for its fish diversity, especially after the Bypass floods. In April 2011 several endangered green sturgeon were



Photo credit: Manfred Kusch

A glimpse of a salmon swimming upstream in Putah Creek

rescued from Greens Lake and returned to the river after they were trapped when high water receded. More typically, if there are sturgeon, they are the massive white sturgeon that also travel up the Toe Drain.

Crayfish are common in the ditches, ponds and rice fields. Although not a fish, they can be collected with a fishing license. There is only one native crayfish left in California and it is not found here. In the YBWA there are red swamp crayfish and virile crayfish. Both are considered invasive. Crayfish can be agricultural pests because they burrow into banks and levees and eat young rice plants. However, they have become an important food for river otters, herons, egrets and raccoons.

Although better known for waterfowl, the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is an important location for many fish species. The historic shallow floodplains of the Sacramento River that provided important spawning and rearing habitat for native fish are gone, but the agricultural fields and wetlands in the YBWA provide valuable habitat for fish as well as birds. 🐟



Photo credit: Beth Sawdige

Otters love fresh fish!

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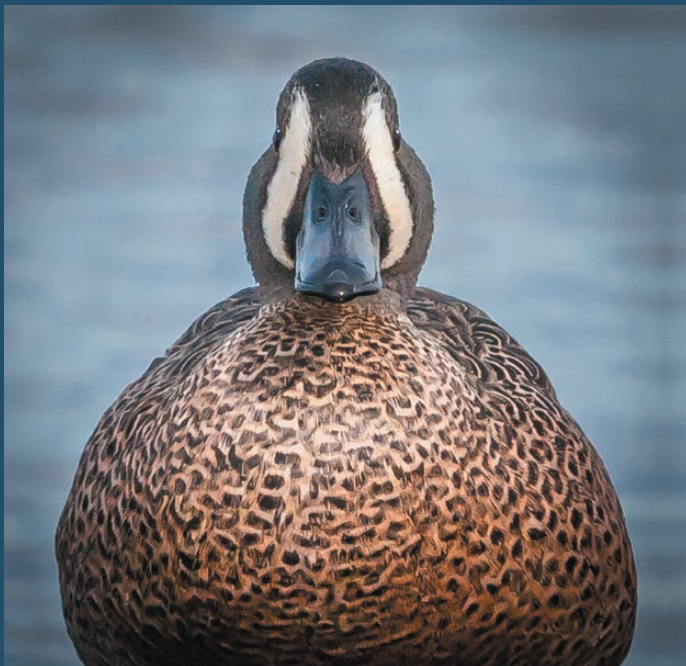
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California Duck Days 2016



Blue-winged Teal

Photo credit: Rob Floerke

Friday, February 19:

Duck Days Welcome Reception and
Student Wildlife Art Show
5:30-7:30 pm • Davis Art Center • 1919 F Street, Davis

Saturday, February 20:

Workshops, Field Trips & Activities All Day
Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Headquarters
45211 County Road 32B (Chiles Road), Davis

For a full schedule of events and to register for Duck
Days go to www.yolobasin.org

Questions? Contact Yolo Basin
Foundation at 530-757-3780
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