

White-faced Ibis Rookery

by Dave Feliz, Manager, Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area

One of the Wildlife Area brood ponds constructed in 2007 next to Interstate 80 was colonized by spectacular numbers of White-faced Ibis this summer. They were initially noticed during the first week of June, as large numbers of these dark birds were seen dropping into the new ponds.

Upon closer inspection, many of the birds were vocalizing. If you've spent a lot of time around ibis, they are not great conversationalists generally but are more talkative at their breeding grounds. Their two note "kwnk, kwnk" calls filled the air. When combined with the guttural notes of the Yellow-headed Blackbirds and Great-tailed Grackles also breeding in this marsh, the sound was magical and unlike any audio array I've experienced in Yolo County.

At sunrise, the numbers of ibis leaving the pond were staggering. At least 2,000 of these birds appeared to be breeding in this small pond. Large clumps of hard stemmed bulrush, which were transplanted prior to the pond being flooded in September 2007 had thrived and were magnets for the breeding ibis. They sat and vocalized from these clumps, and many nests were located within the vertical structure of the rushes.

By mid-June, many birds were seen carrying nesting material into the marsh, usually tule stems or clumps of multi-branched vegetation. These individuals arrived in distinct groups during the late afternoon. By late July, juvenile White-faced Ibis were seen in the surrounding rice fields. By late August,

all breeding activity had ceased and we began draining the pond.


One constant in the Pacific Flyway is that things are never the same. The numbers of White-faced Ibis in California has fluctuated wildly within recorded history. Joseph Grinnel reported this species as a "common sum-



Photo credit: Dave Feliz

mer visitant and breeder to the San Joaquin Valley" in 1918. Breeding slowed considerably by the mid-1950's until the mid-1980's. During this time, it was a rare event to see a White-faced Ibis in California.

High water in several marshes around the Great Salt Lake in Utah in the early 1980's precipitated the expansion of this species into Idaho, Montana, and California.

The Yolo Bypass provides flood protection for the entire Sacramento Valley and emergent vegetation is carefully controlled to not impede the movement of flood waters to the Delta. Emergent cover such as this cattail/bulrush marsh occurs within strictly prescribed limits. Within these limits, this habitat type can still provide important habitat values, such as a successful ibis breeding colony. 

Yolo Basin Foundation Plays a Role in Delta Discussions

by Robin Kulakow, Executive Director

Yolo Basin Foundation along with the Delta Protection Commission is co-sponsoring a new project to address the complex land management challenges in the Lower Yolo Bypass. This effort is called the Lower Yolo Bypass Planning Forum. The Center for Collaborative Policy is guiding participants through what is called multi-stakeholder collaborative planning. The Lower Yolo Bypass is defined as the area between the south border of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and Rio Vista. It encompasses Liberty Island, Prospect Island, Little Holland Tract, Cache Slough, Hastings Tract, and Egbert Tract.

Lower Bypass lands are owned by private parties, the US Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, Trust for Public Lands, Port of Sacramento and others. Most of the Lower Bypass is used for agriculture and privately managed habitat. The Deep Water Ship Channel enters the Delta in the Lower Bypass, and Solano County Water Agency pumps water for the cities of Fairfield and Vacaville.

Some lands/levees have fallen into disrepair, flooding Prospect and Liberty Islands. These flooded areas offer many habitat benefits but also pose management challenges. The Lower Yolo Bypass is seen by Southern California water interests as a prime area to mitigate for the loss of Delta Smelt by creating tidal wetlands. This issue presents wide ranging concerns from flood control impacts to release of methyl-

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Memorable Tree-Planting in the Wildlife Area

by Sarah Ross, Volunteer Coordinator

Memorial Day Weekend is observed in many ways. It is a time when we remember those who have died in service to the nation, it is a chance for people to have a long weekend break and for us here at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area this past Memorial Day Weekend, it was an opportunity to create something memorable now and in the future – a planting of several hundred native trees in newly restored wetlands.

The Department of Fish and Game is developing 48 acres outside the levee system and outside the publicly-accessible region of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. These new wetlands will eventually become home to the Yolo Basin Foundation/Department of Fish and Game wetland education program *Discover the Flyway*, a program that has hosted over 30,000 students. Since these new wetlands are outside of the flood control zone of the Bypass, trees are allowed here. This lets us create increased riparian habitat for wildlife and shade for visiting school groups.

Mary Schiedt, Department of Fish and Game, manages the 48 acres. She selected native species and ordered them through Cornflower Farms and Hartland Nursery. In preparation for the planting, and to make the job more manageable for all our willing volunteers, Mary and the rest of the DFG team augered several hundred holes around the swales and ponds of the 48 acres. This was no mean feat, given the hardness of the clay at the time. Needless to say at least one auger bit is now history. Since the area will be used by wildlife and children (note the difference) several issues had to be considered, including the need to plant larger foundation trees before the smaller species are planted, keeping vista lines open, and avoiding planting aphid-attracting trees, such as cottonwoods, where picnic tables will be located. To ensure that trees were planted in the planned sites, Mary placed colored flags in the augered holes, with matching flags in the plant pots. A trial mini-planting by volunteers Ann Burris, Mike

Reinhart and Kirsten Oelke and some Yolo Basin Foundation staff was carried out prior to the main event.

After a certain amount of anxiety about weather and how many people would turn up, Saturday May 24th dawned dry but overcast and over 30 volunteers including girl scouts and boy scouts turned up to help.



Volunteer Mike Savino at the planting

Boosted by a hotdog barbecue and brownies, the volunteer team planted 700 plants from the 14 foundation tree species. By the end of the day, thickets of multi-colored flags

signaled the beginnings of what will become riparian habitat.

Planting in early summer may seem odd to any gardeners reading this. However, water in these wetlands is all controlled, with water levels able to be raised and lowered as needed. Mary also hand waters plants away from direct water sources such as the ponds. To date there has been minimal loss of plants, except for damage due to wind or grazing by rabbits and other animals.

This summer, several bird species have been observed breeding in the new 48 acre wetlands, notably Song Sparrows, Marsh Wrens, Killdeers, Red-winged Blackbirds, Mockingbirds, Cliff Swallows and even a Bullocks Oriole pair. Wilson's Phalaropes, Green Herons, Cinnamon Teal, Loggerhead Shrikes and a number of other shorebird and waterfowl species have also been seen, as have river otters and raccoons.

Bearing in mind that the established riparian area in the current demonstration wetland is only 10 years old, our dream of a riparian forest will soon be a reality. 🌱

Discover the Flyway School Program "Stats" for the 2007-2008 School Year

Total <i>Discover the Flyway</i> student visits since 1997:	30,869
Student visits:	3,608
Chaperones accompanying field trips:	949
Teaching days:	120
Participating schools:	62 (49 public and 13 private)
School districts served:	16
Counties served:	5 (Yolo, Sacramento, Solano, Placer, El Dorado)
Teachers trained (<i>Discover the Flyway</i> workshops):	55
Sponsored buses:	29 (51 classes and 985 students)
Other student visits (Nature Bowl and Marsh Madness):	226
<i>Discover the Flyway</i> docent volunteer hours (August-June):	1065

Featured Volunteers: Brigitte Dinaberg and Barbara Greene

by Sarah Ross, Volunteer Coordinator

It is entirely fitting, in this Bucks for Ducks issue of the *Yolo Flyway*, to feature two volunteers who contribute hugely to both Bucks for Ducks and the *Discover the Flyway* school program. In fact, it may come as a surprise to some who visit us, to find that Barbara Greene and Brigitte Dinaberg are actually volunteers and not staff.

Barbara Greene, a Davis local, began volunteering with the Yolo Basin Foundation in June 2006 after retiring from her job at UC Davis. Barbara says, "I read about the Yolo Basin Foundation in the *Davis Enterprise*. I dropped by the office and got information on volunteering, attended the volunteer training and was off and running. After helping out in the office, I found that was my niche."

In reality while the office may be her "niche," Barbara contributes to almost every aspect of YBF life. California Duck Days festival-goers will know Barbara from her stints serving in the "cafeteria." Barbara also helps out at Bucks for Ducks and The Naturalist Holiday Party. In the YBF office, Barbara

When I asked Barbara what kept her volunteering with the Yolo Basin Foundation, she replied, "Definitely the people. I have met some wonderful people--both volunteers and staff. The staff appreciates everything the volunteers do and they make it fun to work. There is also the satisfaction of helping children learn about the environment and their local wildlife".

Brigitte Dinaberg began volunteering with the Yolo Basin Foundation at the same time that I became Volunteer Coordinator in January 2007. In fact, she dropped out of the sky and in through my door in such a way that it gave me a very skewed idea about the ease with which volunteers could be "recruited"!

After moving to Sacramento in 2005, Brigitte says she would see the large "Vic Fazio Yolo Wildlife Area" billboard sign on her way across the Causeway to visit her family in Davis. Brigitte continues, "One day I used the county road when the I-80 was a parking lot, and found the Fish and Game Headquarters where I met you. You know the rest..." And we are so grateful for the rest.

Brigitte, like Barbara, is an office mainstay. She helps us with just about anything we need, be it preparation for teacher workshops or data entry teacher. Brigitte is a major donor in the Bucks for Ducks live auction and has also helped in the

preparation for the event, including stuffing more than her fair share of envelopes. She is involved in Duck Days registration and has



Brigitte at work on a tule hut

even helped out with the building of the new tule hut at the demonstration wetlands. As if this weren't enough, Brigitte decided to train as a *Discover the Flyway* docent and can regularly be found teaching children about the soil in the wetlands.

Why does Brigitte take all this on? She says "I feel very strongly that children, especially urban children, need to be exposed to nature and its many wonders. This is the only way we can instill in them an appreciation for nature and a desire to take care of it later in their lives. I enjoy seeing their enthusiasm in learning something new." Brigitte believes "since I am retired, I feel I have an obligation to contribute to society, which in turn enriches my life and brings joy to me. I believe that the Yolo Basin Foundation is a wonderful organization, and I am proud to be of help in any way I can."

How lucky the Yolo Basin Foundation is to have two wonderful women like Barbara and Brigitte volunteering with us. We have two 'Queen Bs' here in our YBF hive--Barbara and Brigitte. Thank you! 🌱



Barbara entering data in the office

inputs registration data from events such as Duck Days, and helps keep the database up-to-date. She has also helped with countless tasks associated with running teacher and docent workshops.

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mercury when sediments are disturbed.

The goal of the Forum is to negotiate a mutually agreed upon plan for management of the Lower Yolo Bypass within 13 months. One of YBF's roles as a co-sponsor is to insure that the Forum is effective in involving all stakeholders. We will be keeping the Bypass community involved through communications with the larger Yolo Bypass Working Group and by representing recreational and environmental education interests.

The first activity of the Forum was a June boat trip starting at Steamboat Slough and traveling by Prospect Island up to the north end

of Liberty Island. It was very instructive to see the flooded islands and weakened levees. The first meeting was attended by over 50 stakeholders, which is a good indication of people's willingness to sit down together to work out the complex technical and political issues.

Why are we doing this? We believe we are in a good position to help. There is a lot at stake. Yolo Basin Foundation has a 20-year track record of working with diverse interest groups associated with the Yolo Bypass, and it is time to use this experience to help the community develop a plan to manage this vital natural resource. If you wish to know more about the Forum's activities, you can go to our website: www.yolobasin.org. 



Many thanks to long-time Yolo Basin Foundation supporters Miki and Laura Fujitsubo who designed, printed and donated several hundred copies of the sticker. We've been passing them out to our summer "Bat Talk and Walk" participants. They've been a huge hit, especially with the kids!