



# YOLO FLYWAY



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## Welcome Jeff Stoddard!

by Ann Brice, Co-Executive Director

We're delighted to have Jeff Stoddard, the new manager of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, on board. He officially began on March 1<sup>st</sup>. He came to us from the Department of Fish and Game's CA Landowner Incentive Program in Sacramento where he was the coordinator.



Upper Newport Bay, Bolsa Chica, Coal Canyon and Laguna Laurel Ecological Reserves. He comes to our Wildlife Area with an amazing amount of relevant experience, especially considering that he's just 31 years old!

Jeff grew up in Napa County and graduated from CA State University at Humboldt in 2006 where he majored in wildlife and minored in fisheries, and he began working for DFG during the summers while he was still a student.

He sees his goal as the improvement of waterfowl and shorebird carrying capacity at the Wildlife Area through habitat improvement. "There's been so much growth here. Now I have an opportunity to put all the pieces together," he says.


Jeff still doesn't know the complete extent of his duties, but in addition to the Wildlife Area, they include supervising Ryan Caruthers, the Delta Unit Biologist, whose territory covers Liberty Island and Woodbridge Ecological Reserve, among other sites. Ryan is also housed here at the Yolo Headquarters.

One of Jeff's passions is cycling, and he pedals to work every day from West Sacramento, where he lives with his wife Becca, and their three children, Leopold, 6, Teddy, 4 and Dawn, 2. Becca and Jeff were truly high school sweethearts—they met when they were freshmen in

Napa and graduated together from Humboldt.

The cycling bug has led Jeff to decide that we can hold occasional bicycling open houses at the Wildlife Area. Our first one is tentatively scheduled for September 29<sup>th</sup>. Jeff says, "I envision it as a chance to get to know the

Wildlife Area and its wildlife better, not as a series of time trials!" He wants to see scopes set up with docents in several of the parking lots, so individuals and families can pedal from station to station, learning as they go. We'll publish more details on the Yolo Basin Foundation listserv in the fall.

Jeff has received two thumbs up from the Foundation staff. He's very supportive of our programs and not afraid to consider new ideas. His office door is always open, and that policy extends to the public at large too, so stop by and introduce yourself! 

## A River Runs Through It

by Robin Kulakow, Executive Director

Yolo Basin Foundation recently signed a work agreement with the Department of Fish and Game Ecosystem Restoration Program, to manage a three-year effort to create a habitat restoration plan for Putah Creek from the Solano Diversion Dam to the Toe Drain located on the eastside of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. The end result of this ambitious effort will be completed studies, a project description, CEQA analysis, permits and selected final designs to improve fish and wildlife habitat along Lower Putah Creek.

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area encompasses the historic remnants of the Putah Creek Sinks. For eons the terminus of Putah Creek was a web of inter-tidal sloughs that ended in the Yolo Basin. There was no direct link to the Sacramento River except during the frequent years when the Yolo Basin become part of the vast inland sea that covered much of the Central Valley. Chinook salmon made their way through the maze of sloughs and tule-covered wetlands to spawn in the gravels of Putah Creek.

—continued on p. 2

That job involved working with private landowners and wildlife areas to enhance and manage wetlands throughout the greater Central Valley.

Before that Jeff was the Orange County Ecological Reserve Manager, which included

River continued from p. 1

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, farmers modified the creek to deliver water to farms and protect the community from the frequent floods. The result is that the creek is now a highly modified channel that ends in a straight channel that connects to the Toe Drain. The Toe Drain, called the Tule Canal, above Interstate 80, is the channel on the east side of the Wildlife Area that drains the farms and wetlands of the Yolo Bypass. It connects directly with the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta near Liberty Island.

The Putah Creek Accord, signed by Solano County Irrigation District, City of Davis, Putah Creek Council and others in 2000 mandates as natural a flow regime as feasible to maintain a living stream to benefit native fish. As a result, salmon returned to spawn in the creek in 2003.

Salmon find their way up the Toe Drain starting in early fall; however, the Los Rios Check Dam, located near the terminus of the creek, is removed on December 1<sup>st</sup> when the water is no longer needed for irrigation of crops and flood-up of wetlands. When the check dam boards are removed, a pulse of water, released from Solano Diversion Dam, makes its way down the creek, joining the water from the check dam. This significant pulse of water is what signals the waiting salmon that it is time to move up the creek.


The proposed restoration plan will create a new fish friendly stream channel beginning with a diversion structure about one mile upstream from the Los Rios Check Dam. The new channel will be approximately 5 miles long, ending at the recently restored tidal wetlands on the Toe Drain, all within the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. The proposed new channel will be constructed on land now in irrigated pasture, row crops or fallow ground on the Wildlife Area.

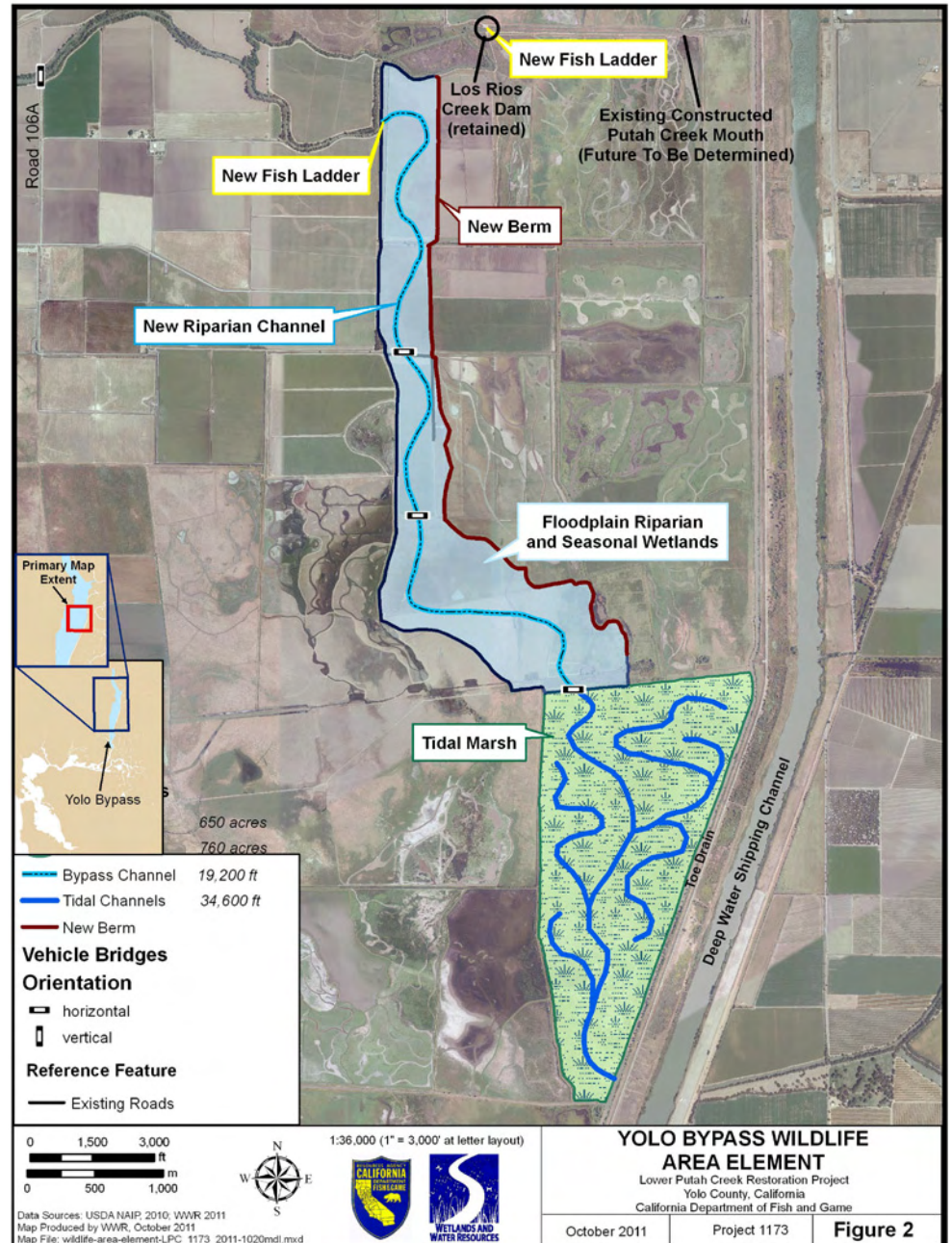
The overall plan is to support the recovery of local fall-run Chinook salmon. This realignment of the stream will allow Chinook salmon to enter Putah Creek prior to the current December 1 dam removal date, about one month earlier than under current conditions. The new channel will include a series of shallow, seasonal wetlands to provide high quality rearing habitat for out migrating young salmon.

This will allow young salmon to enter the Toe Drain in healthier condition. The idea

is that the survival rate of young salmon reaching the ocean is improved with earlier out migration of larger, healthier fish that coincides with peak flows on the Sacramento River. It is anticipated that the project will also improve rearing conditions for steelhead and Sacramento splittail.

The proposed realignment of Putah Creek is just one element of the project. Other actions could include removal of fish bar-

riers and improvement of the channel at several places between the Wildlife Area and Diversion Dam. Yolo Basin Foundation will manage an impressive team of consultants with expertise in habitat restoration design, permitting, hydraulic modeling, and much more. We will also be in charge of the project's outreach efforts. Stay tuned for updates on this exciting new venture for Yolo Basin Foundation! 



One potential footprint for the Wildlife Area portion of the project.

# What's in a Bill?

## Northern Shovelers at the Wildlife Area

by Corky Quirk, Education Associate

One of the most easily identified winter visitors to the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is the Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*), which is so visible because of the male's iridescent green head and neck, bright white chest and breast and rusty sides. Even when the shoveler isn't in full bright color, there is no question of identification because of the wide, spoon-shaped bill found on both the male and the female. The shoveler has the largest bill of any duck in North America, and the nickname "spoony" often used by hunters is an apt one for the species. A male Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) is also a green-headed duck, but is easily distinguished from the shoveler, even at a distance, by its brown chest and lack of the distinctive bill.

Although the Mallard is the most common duck in North America, at the Wildlife Area one is more likely to see a Northern Shoveler. Fish and Game's hunting statistics show that almost half the ducks taken there are shovelers. This may be in part because shovelers enjoy shallow open marshes that are mud-bottomed and rich in invertebrate life, and also quite prevalent at the Wildlife Area, while other species like Mallards tend to stick to sheltered, deeper puddle areas,

Both Mallards and Northern Shovelers are dabbling ducks, which use their lamellae, comb-like structures inside the bill that allow water to flow out and trap food particles. Each species has its preferred food source. Mallards dabble to feed on seeds, rootlets and tubers of aquatic plants. Shovelers eat a combination of seeds plants, aquatic insects, mollusks and crustaceans.

Both the distance between lamellae and their length determine food selection. The shoveler has about 110 lamellae along the edge of its bill. This spacing can be varied when the bird adjusts its bill, allowing for some choice of particle size and avoidance of detritus, including silt and sand. Ducks with long lamellae, like shovelers, are more efficient at selecting smaller food particles while ducks with short lamellae, like Mallards, are more efficient at selecting larger particles. This allows the two species to successfully live in close proximity without outcompeting each other for the same food resources.

In addition to bill design, the shovelers are also unique in their feeding styles. They tend not to tip, with tail up, as many dabbling ducks, but rather to swim with their bills flat along the water's surface, moving their heads side to side, skimming tiny plants and animals off the water's surface. The shoveler pulls water in at the tip of its bill taking in food and detritus and then pushes the extra out through the lamellae with the tongue.

Shovelers frequently feed in groups, swimming in circles, kicking up the mud with their paddling feet. Other shovelers in the group then consume food raised by the group. This feeding method is called "pintailing." Unlike other dabbling ducks, the shoveler does not feed out of the water.

Even though the Northern Shoveler may be found at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area all year long, winter is the time to see them in



Male Shoveler



Female Shoveler

large numbers along with many other species, like Mallard, Northern Pintail, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Cinnamon Teal, and Green-winged Teal. Now, in the summer months, you have to look a little harder to find them, but pairs may be seen almost anywhere there's water. Grab your bird book or "Birds of the Yolo Wildlife Area" bird card and head on out to see how many species you can identify on a summer day. 🦆

### References:

**Virtual Duck Bills Demonstrate Species Coexistence;**

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**Northern Shoveler;** [http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern\\_Shoveler/lifehistory](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern_Shoveler/lifehistory) Cornell Lab of Ornithology

# Thank You to our Discover the Flyway Sponsors


We'd like to acknowledge and say THANK YOU to the following sponsors who supported the *Discover the Flyway* Program for the 2011-2012 school year.

Arata Brothers  
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Their generous contributions made it possible for another successful year, including supporting the training workshops for teachers, interns and volunteers, providing learning materials, and conducting the outdoor science field trips for over 3,500 students. Their donations also made it possible for over 25% of the students to participate by sponsoring their bus transportation, without which they could not have been able to attend a field trip and experience this unique wetland and wildlife learning experience in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area.

We receive many thank you notes from teachers and students, which we send to these sponsors of their field trips.

"Thank you so much for funding our field trip. The Yolo Basin Foundation makes this field trip possible by providing grants to us for the visit and transportation. This high quality science and environmental experience provides hands on science that excites and engages the students and we use the shared experience all year long developing vocabulary, art, social studies and science concepts. Your sponsorship is very much appreciated!" – *Teacher*

"Thank you for the money. If we didn't have the money then we couldn't go to the field trip. I never went to a wetlands before. I saw a lot of birds. I saw a red neck bird and a mallard duck and a lot of algae. I saw a lot of white egrets. I liked all the stations." – *Student* 



## Dean Witter Foundation Matching Grant Increases Membership

We are grateful to our new and renewing members who responded to the news of a matching membership donation offer from Dean Witter Foundation. We're pleased to report that the \$10,000 goal was met, with a 10% increase in new and renewing members during the matching grant campaign as compared to the same time frame the previous year. We thank Dean Witter Foundation for this opportunity to double each membership donation.

Membership donations are vital to Yolo Basin Foundation, as they directly benefit the thousands of school children who participate in the *Discover the Flyway* school program, as well as the many other environmental education programs throughout the year for all ages. In addition, membership donations support Yolo Basin Foundation's ability to speak out on behalf of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and continue to improve access for all to this important public open space.

## Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, June 6, 2012



# Veronica Schwalbach

by Heidi Satter, Volunteer Coordinator

Some people are born to teach. Even so, it is a rare gift to be able to inspire genuine enthusiasm for learning. YBF volunteer Veronica Schwalbach not only shares this special combination, she also makes giving 110 % to everything she does look easy.

Veronica started volunteering with Yolo Basin Foundation as a docent with the *Discover the Flyway* (DTF) in 2009, the same summer she retired from 39 years of teaching.

“As I was packing up my classroom, an email arrived (from YBF) inviting adults to volunteer as *Discover the Flyway* docents. Remembering that I always loved the outdoor science activities my mother enrolled me in every summer, I was thrilled to be recruited. Here was a golden opportunity to keep learning about the outdoors, to keep my identity as a teacher, and to continue to see the world through the eyes of children. Of course, I jumped at the chance to keep doing what I loved!”

Sharing nature with children seems to come naturally to Veronica. She possesses a rare mix of complimentary traits: she is energetic and down to earth, intelligent and upbeat, positive and realistic. She laughs easily, works tirelessly and gives effortlessly.

In addition to volunteering with DTF, Veronica volunteers for the summer Bat series, Duck Days and Bucks for Ducks, where her help with food operations is invaluable. “I enjoy working with the kids the most. It’s enormous fun to stir up their natural enthusiasm for whatever surrounds them in a novel environment. Their questions make me consider how my interpretation of the world can be so strikingly different from theirs. In fact, it’s hard to say who learns more each time, the students or this docent!”

Veronica has been a YBF volunteer for 3 years, but her connection to the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area started years ago. As a veteran Nature Bowl coach, she brought her students to the Wildlife Area. Nature Bowl, a regional team competition for 3<sup>rd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade students, focuses on environmental science and natural resource conservation. It is organized through the Department of Fish and Game and made possible by several co-sponsors, including the Yolo Basin Foundation. As a team coach for the first 26 years and a judge the last two, Veronica has been continuously involved with Nature Bowl since its inception 28 years ago. On its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, (her 20<sup>th</sup> year of participation), Veronica received the Department of Fish and Game Director’s Award for her dedication.

“I always took my (Nature Bowl) teams on as many weekend field trips as possible. Twelve years ago YBF’s Saturday bird watching trips became a mainstay of our preparations. Then we added Duck Days to our repertoire. I always appreciated the enthusiastic expertise and patience the YBF docents showed each of my students on these outings.”

A Bay Area native, Veronica grew up in Concord, CA. Veronica earned a BA in English as well as an Elementary Teaching Credential from UC Berkeley. She also has a Masters in Multicultural Education from CSUS. After two years as a fourth grade teacher in Paso Robles, she moved to Sacramento County and spent the next 37 years of her

educational career in the San Juan Unified School District.

“Over the years I’ve taught special education, spent time as a math specialist, a Staff Development Resource Teacher, a fifth/sixth grade teacher, and as a teacher of the gifted at the fourth grade level.”

Veronica is also a wife, mother and grandmother. She and her husband, Gary, have been married for 34 years. Her oldest son, Chuck, is a successful mechanical engineer working for Apple Computers in Cupertino. His wife, Diane, works for Sunset Magazine. They have two children, Owen and Lorelei. Veronica’s younger son, Max, earned his Culinary Arts Certificate from American River College in December. He continues to take classes there to finish his AA degree.


In addition to her family life, Veronica has several other activities and hobbies.

She currently tutors 10 students per week. Also, in collaboration with her long-time teaching partner (also retired), she gives presentations and teacher-workshops on formative assessment and how to help students develop writing, comprehension, and vocabulary skills through writing poetry.

Veronica loves to read. “I truly relish the opportunity in retirement to savor the tomes of professional authors instead of student writing every night! My favorite authors are those who delve into the human psyche and/or historical events; On the other hand, a good laugh never hurts. I also read and collect children’s literature including picture books.”

Another hobby is food. For the past three years, Veronica has been working her way through the San Francisco Chronicle’s *Top 100 Restaurants* list. “It’s a good thing that most of the restaurants stay on the list year after year!”

According to Veronica, “Deciding to retire and planning what to do in retirement are two very different things. Even though I knew I would be busy two days a week taking care of my infant grandson, I was worried that I wouldn’t have enough projects for the other days of the week to keep me as relentlessly active as I need to be.”

Based on what we’ve seen so far, retirement has been keeping Veronica busy doing the things she loves and loving the things she’s doing. And we love that she spends her volunteer time here. As far as YBF is concerned, she has earned a gold star in retirement and an A+ in volunteering. 



Ann Ellice

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 and select "Join/Donate Now"



### Join us at a summer "Bat Talk and Walk" program!

Go to our website at [www.yolobasin.org](http://www.yolobasin.org) to see details and a schedule. Suggested event donation: \$10 per adult. Children are free when accompanied by an adult.

Our new "Explore the Dark Side" bat t-shirt will be available for sale online and at our programs.

Photos of the Mexican free-tailed bats featured on the t-shirt were provided by Ching Chang.



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