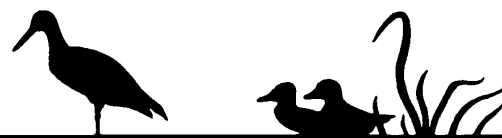
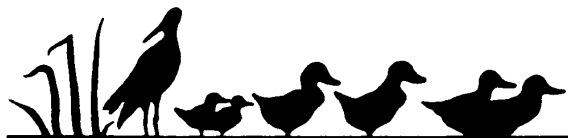


FRIENDS of FAMOSA SLOUGH

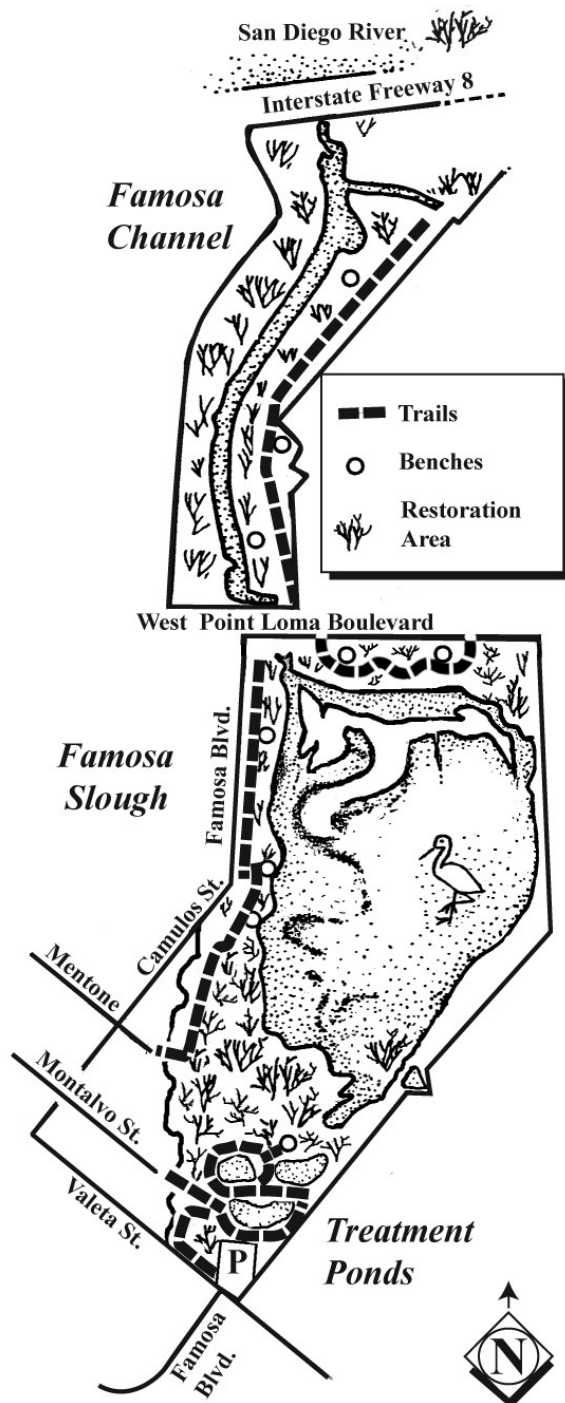


A California Non-Profit Corporation

Box 87280, San Diego, CA 92138-7280

SPRING/SUMMER 2010 NEWSLETTER

FAMOSA SLOUGH TRAIL MAP



New Trail Map

In this, our 20th year since Famosa Slough was purchased by the City of San Diego, we have updated the trail map that is in the FFS Brochure and the FFS Bird List. The new trail map shows the newest trail just south of West Point Loma Blvd., which was completed in 2007 as part of the marsh restoration project that restored 2 acres of wetland and created an island. The two entrance gates were kept closed until the summer of 2008 so that the vegetation could get established.

The new map shows the nine benches that were installed by the Friends, including two that were constructed by the **Rotary Clubs of Shelter Island and Downtown** in 2007, five that were constructed by the Friends, and two that were purchased in memory of two special people: **Greig Peters**, who supported us at the California Regional Water Quality Control Board and passed away in 2001, and **Bill Bartleman**, past Board member, who passed away in 2007.

ASLA San Diego Grant to FFS

The San Diego Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects awarded a 2010 Community Grant to the Friends in December for "Famosa Slough Trail Improvement." The ASLA Grant will be used to design and implement improvements to a section of the trail system along Famosa Boulevard. This project will make the trail more accessible to a larger range of visitors, improve the safety for all users, prevent erosion, reduce the need for maintenance, improve the appearance of the project site, restore native habitat, and provide information on native, easily maintained, drought resistant plants, which are suitable for landscaping.

2010 Science Fair Winners

The Friends of Famosa Slough selected two 7th grade students, **Avery Van Houten** and **Genesis Lucero**, from the **Rhoades School in Encinitas** for awards. They presented their projects at the **Greater San Diego Science and Engineering Fair** held on March 24th. Each was awarded \$75 and membership in the Friends. Avery worked at San Elijo Lagoon to create a habitat suitable for nesting by Belding's Savannah Sparrows. Genesis compared several filtration materials to evaluate their effectiveness as media for the improvement of wastewater quality. Judges Callie Mack, Jim Peugh, and David Kimball found both projects to be well designed and reflected a mature grasp of environmental issues.

These Wasps are Really Diggin' It!

By Callie Mack

This summer, if you happen to be looking down as you walk near the end of the trail leading to Mentone Street, you may notice a small, green-eyed insect flying in low and slow for a landing on the bare dirt bank to the right of the trail, and then either digging furiously, or disappearing down one of several small holes nearby. This busy little creature is the sand wasp, *Bembix* sp., represented by over a dozen species in California.

A small, stocky wasp with black and pale bluish-green abdominal banding and rather striking light green eyes, our local *Bembix* prefers sand dunes, beach bluffs and mesas - anywhere the dirt is dry and loose enough for burrowing. A fast, industrious digger equipped with a fringe of stiff, coarse hairs on its forelegs, it can disappear beneath the soil surface within seconds, sending up a tiny spray of dirt behind it.

Male sand wasps simply make shallow burrows in which they can spend the night. Females have a much more demanding job - they excavate tubes about six to nine inches deep into the side of a bank or dune. Each tube will eventually contain a single *Bembix* larva. Other predatory wasp species such as the tarantula hawk and mud dauber lay their eggs on a single large food source such as a tarantula or caterpillar, then seal the burrow and leave their young to feed on their prey until maturity. The female sand wasp is a more involved parent, bringing her young a continuous supply of freshly paralyzed or killed flies. When the larvae mature into adult wasps, they'll feed on flower nectar.

While sand wasps don't live in hives, they are considered gregarious, forming loose colonies of several tubes in an area where the soil and other conditions are to their liking. You'll find such a colony in the sandy soil at the side of the trail as you near Mentone Street. Sand wasps aren't aggressive, and are unlikely to sting humans unless someone foolishly attempts to handle them, so if you should be lucky enough to spot one at work, just watch and enjoy!



Sand Wasp, photo by Callie Mack

Sources:

California Bembecine Sand Wasps, Bohart and Horning, Jr., Bulletin of the California Insect Survey, Vol. 13, Univ. of California Press, 1971.

Insects of the Los Angeles Basin, Hogue, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, 1993.

California Insects, Powell and Hogue, Univ. of California Press, 1979.

Fast-Growing Aliens Attack Famosa Slough!

By Callie Mack

That's the kind of headline that usually gets attention. However, these "aliens" invading our Slough aren't menacing creatures from bad science fiction, easily defeated with a handy laser weapon (we wish it were that easy!). Our "aliens" are exotic invasive plants from other places right here on Earth, and our weapons are pretty humble: shovels, dandelion forks and hoe-matics. As a volunteer doing invasive plant removal at Famosa Slough for the past four-plus years, I have my own favorite targets.

One "alien" ranking very high on my hit list is Kikuyu grass, *Pennisetum clandestinum*. Its species name refers to its nearly hidden (clandestine) flower heads and seeds. This Federally-listed noxious weed, originally from East Africa, is one tough plant. Imported around 1918 to control erosion along ditch banks, K-grass tolerates heat, drought, dog damage and shade. The qualities that make it popular as turf in parks, cemeteries and golf courses also make it a tough, adaptable invasive. It spreads quickly, sending out finger-thick *rhizomes* (spreading, jointed underground stems) and *stolons* (jointed stems growing flat atop the soil surface). Each joint of a rhizome or stolon can send out its own stems and roots. Kikuyu grass rhizomes at the Slough may extend over 6 inches deep into the soil, making them very tough to remove, and the stolons can exceed 8 feet in length. Escaping from captivity, K-grass grows rapidly, creating a monoculture and stealing light and nutrients from other, more desirable plants. At Famosa Slough, K-grass climbs up willow trees, to four or more feet above ground. Smothering entire areas with its long fleshy stolons, it forms thick, springy mats, which also make good illegal campsites and hiding places.

Evicting this unwanted "guest" isn't easy. Without the use of herbicides, manual removal requires a lot of steady, slow, thorough labor. All the pieces of stolons and rhizomes must be carefully removed from the soil and bagged, since each little joint can become an entire new plant. Regular follow-up is required to catch any sneaky new shoots sprouting from rhizomes that were missed previously.

The area below Temecula Street was heavily infested with K-grass for a number of years. Removal on the east side of the trail has been accomplished entirely by manual methods. Removal on the west side of the trail was jump-started when the City sprayed part of that side with glyphosate (Roundup) a few years ago. Right now, we have partial success at the third bench, with nearly complete eradication on the wetlands (east) side of the trail. Native plants such as fat hen, salt grass, *Frankenia* and pickleweed, have moved back into the area under the willows, and other natives such as *Rosa californica*, *Juncus acutus* and *Artemisia palmeri* have been planted. Removal efforts continue on the West side, where restoration with native plants has also begun. Success on the West side will require at least a few more seasons of intensive labor and follow-up. I'm looking forward to the challenge!

Update on Native Plantings, by Chet Nelson

Our November work party resulted in planting several dozen clumps of salt grass, over 20 mulefat, and a large number of willows, wild grapes and other native plants along the slope at the western edge of the channel portion of Famosa Slough. Thanks to ten inches of rain (as measured at the corner of W. Pt. Loma and Famosa Blvds.) in a few weeks in February and March, most of those newly-planted natives are bursting with life. The abundance of rain also gets partial credit for the lush appearance of other natives in the area.

We now have 15 Torrey pines flourishing there (some now close to 20' tall), 5 oaks (one well over 10' tall), 2 cottonwoods (one about 15' tall), 7 Mexican elderberries (some about 10' tall), a number of other natives we planted (e.g. spiny rush and bladderpod), and about 20 patches of coast sunflowers. Lush salt grass in some places has climbed the slope almost to the Mariner's Cove fence. We will be planting more natives there in the future, but the revegetation so far is a resounding success.

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

FFS Board of Directors

- Chairman: Jim Peugh..... 619/224-4591
- Vice-Chairman: David Kimball..... 619/224-4975
- Secretary: Chet Nelson 619/222-7006
- Treasurer: Barbara Peugh..... 619/224-4591
- Directors: Cliff Hewitt 619/222-9849
- Callie Mack 619/698-9512
- Jim Pea 619/291-6612
- Jim Prine 619/224-3446

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

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

Birds at Famosa Slough, by Jim Pea

2009 was a good year for birding at Famosa Slough. There were 128 species of birds reported during the year, and, realistically, that means there were probably 115-120 correctly identified species of birds.

The year started out with the continuing Hooded Mergansers that frequented the channel side and the northern end of the Slough. They stayed around until they depleted the crab supply, then moved on. They did not return this winter.

Spring 2009 produced Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Killdeer, and, surprisingly, Forster's Tern nesting sites. The Avocets reared a single chick, the Stilts reared a half dozen chicks, the Killdeer reared a couple chicks, and the Forster's Terns reared four-six chicks. These were not easy to count since they blend so well with the ground and they don't move around much. Of course, the parents actively attacking any onlookers didn't help either. The Forster's Tern chicks seem to be a first for the Slough in recent memory.

The summer was exciting with a pair of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons and one or two offspring. The offspring were seen together, but in flight, and one could not be ruled out as a regularly occurring Black-crowned Night-Heron. The family group stayed around for about a month eating crabs in the channel and in the San Diego River flood channel. This is a rare bird in this part of the country only appearing as a single nesting pair in Imperial Beach recently.

There was a very high count of 12-15 Greater Yellowlegs, but they have moved on while the count of Avocet and Black-necked Stilts has been down this winter. Counts were also low for many of the ducks. Weather or changing migratory patterns may be the reason. The birds that did over-winter seemed to do quite well.

The Plumbeous Vireo over-wintered for at least the third year preferring the willows in the treatment ponds. Nine types of warblers were also seen in that area.

Avocets are nesting now, the Black-necked Stilts are selecting nesting sites, and the Forster's Terns are pairing up and getting ready as well. Song Sparrows, House Sparrows, House Finches and Bushtits have hatched. Savannah Sparrows are on nests, and the ducks have headed north. A great start to the year.

MEMBERSHIP IN FRIENDS OF FAMOSA SLOUGH

_____ 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. _____

(Contributions are tax deductible to a 501(c)(3) organization.) ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION: \$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____

NAME(S) _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____ E-MAIL _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

WORK PARTIES — VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

2nd Saturday of odd-numbered months — July 10, Sept. 11, Nov. 13, Jan. 8, etc.
Meet at 9:00 AM at the intersection of W. Point Loma Boulevard and Famosa Boulevard
San Diego, California 92107

BIRD WALKS — BEGINNERS WELCOME!

3rd Saturday of every month — July 17, Aug. 21, Sept. 18, Oct. 16, Nov. 20, Dec. 18, etc.
Meet at 1:00 PM near the kiosk on Famosa Blvd., south of West Point Loma Blvd.
San Diego, California 92107

FFS Web Site: www.FamosaSlough.org



**Snowy Egret on Famosa Slough sign
photo by Gerald Tietje**