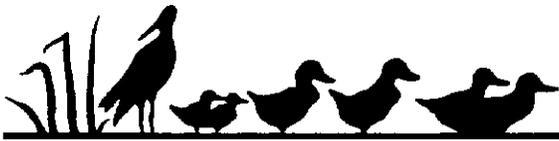


FRIENDS of FAMOSA SLOUGH



A California Non-Profit Corporation



Box 87280, San Diego, CA 92138-7280

FALL 2022 UPDATE

Events in 2022



In conjunction with San Diego Audubon Society, we've been busy with work parties. At the start of the year, we hosted monthly events (on the second Saturday of the month), and we've just resumed our traditional every other month schedule.

We start the events with a little background about the history of Famosa Slough, and then break into groups. One focus is cutting back vegetation that has crept onto the trails or is drooping onto the sidewalk. Teams go to work trimming, lopping, and widening paths. Other volunteers get a primer on plants native to the area vs. non-native species so that they can pull only the non-native plants. Salt grass and shore grass (native) get to stay but the wild oats, foxtails, and kikuyu grass are pulled.

Plants that are removed are collected and moved to a dumpster that is provided by the City.

October 15 at 1 pm – Bird and nature walk

November 12 at 9 am – Work party ([RSVP](#))

November 19 at 1 pm – Bird and nature walk

Contact us if your school, organization, or corporate group wants to schedule a private work event or interpretive field trip at Famosa Slough.

Bumble Bees, in a Wetland?

by Cindy Pencek

Yes, bumble bees frequent the Famosa Slough and you can find them collecting nectar and pollen from different plants depending on the season. From January to March, you can find them on the boxthorn bushes (*Lycium*) near W. Pt. Loma Blvd. In Spring, look for them on the Friends' property by Montalvo Street visiting the sage (*Salvia*) and deerweed (*Acemison*) blossoms. In summer they visit the pink flowers of alkali heath (*Frankenia*) that are found all along the slough, a couple feet up from the shoreline, which are easy to spot along the looped trails by Valeta Street.

This summer, I participated in the first year of the [California Bumble Bee Atlas](#), a community science partnership between the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). With permits from CDFW and landowner permission, volunteers looked for bumble bees and recorded data on what they found following a pre-specified protocol. For 45 minutes, bumble bees are caught with a net, chilled in a cooler, photographed, and released. Data including what plants the bees were collected on, the vegetation in the area, and the weather are recorded and reported back to the Xerces Society. Photos are submitted so species identification can be confirmed. Participants are instructed to get photos of certain parts of the bee such as the underside of the abdomen, the back legs, and the face as these are useful in distinguishing species.

There is definitely a learning curve for catching insects in a net, and eventually I got the hang of it. And across 8 surveys at 5 locations, I caught and released almost 50 bumble bees, all of them Yellow-faced Bumble Bee (*Bombus vosnesenskii*). Size of the bees varied, and I caught at least one queen judging by her larger size. Bumble bees are one of the few native bees that have a social hierarchy with reproductive queens who make smaller female workers and males. The workers and males only live a few months, but the queens live more than a year, finding a safe place to hibernate over winter then starting a nest in late winter or early spring to grow the generation for that year.

Bumble bee nests can be underground or in a cavity and can have 50 to 500 individuals. While looking for bumble bees at Famosa Slough, I was surprised and very excited to (continued on Page 2)

Bumble Bees, in a Wetland?

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find three active bumble bee nests at Famosa Slough. One nest had a visible entry/exit hole in the dirt, and the other two had entrances obscured by vegetation (alkali heath, salt grass, etc). Two of them were along the path by Famosa Blvd. only a few feet above the high tide line, and the other was along the paths around the treatment ponds by Valeta St.

What makes the slough a great place for bees, despite the water?

- Access to native plants with a variety of species that provide blooms that start opening in January and continue through October
- Habitat without pesticides or insecticides
- Areas with loose dirt, or rodent tunnels, or other cavities which could be used for nesting

Another great nearby place for bumble bees is the Pt. Loma Native Plant Garden. I did monthly bumble bee surveys there and found a large number of bees on the manzanitas, poppies, penstemon, and willow mint. With so many flowers to choose from in that garden, it was interesting to see that the bumble bees showed a distinct preference for foraging on certain species of plants.

The Yellow-faced Bumble Bee season is winding down, but we've got another species, the Sonoran Bumble Bee, which flies in fall that you can look for. And there's at least 15 other species of native bees that have been spotted at the slough you can watch. This time of year, look on the Coastal Goldenbush which is full of pollinators.

To catch bumble bees with the California Bumble Bee Atlas in 2023, you can register at:

www.cabumblebeeatlas.org



Yellow-faced Bumble Bee – Survey photograph

Birds! Birds! Birds!

Highlights of Spring 2022 were the Osprey nest in the light structures at Correia Middle School, that can be viewed from the parking lot by Valeta St. Several hummingbirds made nests that could be viewed from the trails. There's an American Kestrel female that leaves the slough in Spring, presumably heading to a different territory for nesting. She returned towards the end of August, look for her on the utility wires, or you might hear her calling. She was seen in September swooping down on Cooper's Hawks and Red-shouldered Hawks encouraging them to leave.

We're looking forward to the transition of birds as Fall migrants stop by the slough and Winter residents arrive.



Yellow-faced Bumble Bee on deerweed



Yellow-faced Bumble Bee emerging from nest