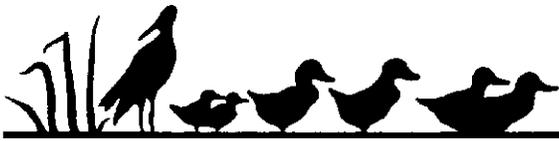


FRIENDS of FAMOSA SLOUGH



A California Non-Profit Corporation



Box 87280, San Diego, CA 92138-7280

JANUARY 2023 NEWSLETTER

Upcoming Events



Gazing off into 2023... Looking forward to hosting several fun and educational events; hope to see you there!
info@famosaslough.org

- Jan 14 – Work Party
- Jan 21 – Bird/Nature Walk
- Feb 6 – Annual Meeting
- Feb 18 – Bird/Nature Walk
- March 11 – Work Party

Annual Meeting: February 6 at 6:00 pm What's in the Water?

Experts discuss the quality of water in the Famosa Slough.

Please join us on Monday evening, February 6, for a close look at what's in the water of the Slough. We know the slough has two sources:

- The daily tidal flows – of saltwater from the San Diego River Channel. And after prolonged rainfall in San Diego's Backcountry, freshwater from upstream, and
- Runoff from the surrounding neighborhood, heaviest, of course, and freshest, after rainfall nearby.

How is it tested? Protected? Is it good for birds, fish and mollusks?

Speakers include experts from the City and County, their consultants, and a nonprofit dedicated to enhancing water quality.

February 6th at 6:00 pm in the Community Room of the Point Loma Hervey Public Library. Light refreshments will be served.

Featured Birds: Reddish Egret or Little Blue Heron?

by Lesley Handa

Winter is a favorite season in San Diego to spend several months enjoying many bird species and as some may look similar, this may create species identification challenges. Nature enthusiasts and birders may have their eyes peeled in coastal areas for Reddish Egret looking for the telltale sign of a slightly bizarre-looking dancing behavior when foraging to frighten fish. Bird enthusiasts may also search for the Little Blue Heron, a year-round resident among other ubiquitous herons such as the larger Great Egret and Great Blue Heron and smaller Snowy Egret. Towards the end of 2022, several times visitors to Famosa Slough were delighted to find not one but four Reddish Egret, the highest number seen in San Diego County according to ebird records. As this species is typically seen alone, seeing four was a delight!
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Reddish Egret

What You Can Do – Invasive Plants

by Cindy Pencek

Have you ever wondered what you can do to help keep natural ecosystems healthy? Here's one thing.

Non-native plants that spread easily and have potential to cause environmental harm are called invasive. Where do they come from? Take a moment to make sure they're not coming from your yard or your neighbor's yard. Brazilian Pepper Tree (*Schinus terebinthifolia*) is one invasive plant we regularly find and have to remove from the Slough.

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Featured Birds: Reddish Egret or Little Blue Heron?

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In terms of conservation, worldwide, the Reddish Egret is recognized as Near-Threatened by the IUCN, as populations are declining. Locally, the Reddish Egret is included in the San Diego Multiple Species Conservation Plan (MSCP) with the City of San Diego actively conserving this species. According to the San Diego County Bird Atlas, there are a handful of individual Little Blue Herons residing in San Diego County. Worldwide, the species is designated of Least Concern by the IUCN but populations are declining.



Reddish Egret – Hunting

As the Reddish Egret winters in San Diego County, identification may be challenging in the presence of Little Blue Heron that also frequent the slough. To help with identification, we will review the differences between Reddish Egret and Little Blue Heron. The season is an indicator differentiating the two species with San Diego as the northernmost limit where Reddish Egret occur during non-breeding and Little Blue Heron occur year-round. Behavior is another indicator as Little Blue Heron remain stationary before striking prey with the bill and do not dance to find food, like the Reddish Egret. Size is an indicator and if both species are present, the Reddish Egret at 27-32 inches in height will typically be larger than the Little Blue Heron at 22-29 inches. As slight overlap in size may occur in small Reddish Egret and large Little Blue Heron, comparing Snowy Egret which is almost always present at the slough at 22-26 inches in height, may be helpful. Reddish Egret are larger than Snowy Egret and Little Blue Heron are roughly the same size as Snowy Egret.

Other important field marks include bill color – both Reddish Egret and Little Blue Heron have a black-tipped bill, but it may be helpful to look for the color contrast of the black tip with a pinkish bill in Reddish Egret and a duller blue bill with a black tip in Little Blue Heron. The neck in the Reddish Egret will be a rusty color with shaggy-

looking loose feathered plumage while the neck is maroon colored in the Little Blue Heron. The body plumage of Reddish Egret is neutral grey while bluish-slate color in Little Blue Heron. The color of legs and feet may not be a helpful indicator to discern between the two species but is



Little Blue Heron - Hunting

important to note as the color is bluish-black in Reddish Egret and dark in the Little Blue Heron.

Other plumages of the Reddish Egret and Little Blue Heron may be confusing as both species may be white, as in the immature plumage in the Little Blue Heron and the white morph of the Reddish Egret. As Little Blue Heron breed here in San Diego, the plumage in immature individuals can be easily confused with the Snowy Egret. If the feet of the bird cannot be seen with bright yellow feet indicating a Snowy Egret, other good field marks include



Juvenile Little Blue Heron

black legs with a yellow line up the back indicating a Snowy Egret and olive-colored legs indicating an immature Little Blue Heron.

The black bill color in Snowy Egret will contrast with the bi-colored bill with a dark tip and bluish base in the immature Little Blue Heron. The white morph of the Reddish Egret, though it does not currently occur in the west, is smaller in size compared to the Great Egret and

Great Blue Heron but larger than the Snowy Egret. In the white morph of the Reddish Egret, look for the bicolored bill with the distinct black tip that will differ from the yellow-colored bill in the Great Egret. *Please make sure to notify Friends of Famosa Slough if you ever see a white morph Reddish Egret!*

What You Can Do - Invasives

(continued from Page 1)

How does it get there? It has berries that birds and rodents move around, spreading its range. And once it's established it's a vigorous grower and really difficult to eradicate.

Another problem plant is Garden Nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*). It originates from the Andes and has been introduced in gardens in California. The plant is a strong grower and reseeds easily, often carpeting and covering native plants. Native plants can't compete when plants like this cover them and they don't get sunlight.



Nasturtium growing at Famosa Slough

Invasive plants also use resources such as water and nutrients in the soil, making them unavailable to the native plants, and changing the ecosystem.

Purple Fountain Grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*) is an exotic perennial that is a big problem along the San Diego River and near Mission Trails Regional Park. The seeds are distributed by the wind, and accordingly travel far and spread really fast.

We've given you only three examples of plants that may be growing in your residential neighborhood, perhaps planted on purpose. Two of these three appear on the San Diego County's undesirable plant list for being highly flammable. There are more. English Ivy (*Hedera*) is a problem, as is Iceplant (*Carpobrotus*, a South African native). We also get Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)

popping up at the slough which spreads both by seeds and creeping roots.

So... What can YOU do? Don't plant them. They can easily spread and be detrimental to the native plants that should be thriving in nature preserves and open space.

Remove them. If they do pop up in your yard, work on getting rid of them. Dig them out, research the best eradication methods for each species. And in the case of Fountain Grass, trimming the bloom shoots off before the flowers go to seed can help stop the spread.

Native plants are adapted to our area and have a better chance of surviving in low water conditions and staying fire-resistant with less water than a non-native plant would need. There are so many benefits of native plants, but that's a story for another day...

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

City's contact is **Mission Bay Senior Park Ranger, Karolynn Estrada-Sparlin**, phone **858/581-7602**.

To contact Friends of Famosa Slough, phone **619/224-4591** or email **info@famosaslough.org**.

www.FamosaSlough.org

You can now donate online

[Paypal.me/FamosaSlough](https://www.paypal.com/donate/?url=https://www.famosaslough.org)

ONGOING EVENTS

WORK PARTIES

2nd Saturday of odd-numbered months —

Jan 14, March 11, May 13, etc.

Meet at 9:00 AM just east of the intersection of West Point Loma and Famosa Boulevards - **Volunteers needed!**

RSVP to info@FamosaSlough.org

NATURE WALKS

3rd Saturday of every month —

January 21, February 18, March 18, April 15, etc.

Meet at 1:00 PM near the kiosk on Famosa Blvd., south of West Point Loma Blvd. - **Beginners welcome!**

Map Location: W. Pt. Loma Blvd. & Famosa Blvd.

MEMBERSHIP IN FRIENDS OF FAMOSA SLOUGH

NAME(S) _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____ E-MAIL _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

___ Please send future newsletters and notices via email only.

___ 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.

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION: \$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____

Donations accepted online at Paypal.me/FamosaSlough

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: _____



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