

Tracking the Refuge

a publication for Friends of Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

Spring 2026



Nature Bowl 2026 Semi-Finals, hosted by Friends of the Refuge were held at Blue Heron Trails in Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge on April 8th and marked the 40th year for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's event. Nearly 90 third through sixth grade students from schools in the Elk Grove and Sacramento area experienced the natural environment through engaging outdoor science activities. Congratulations to the Aspire Vincent Shalvey 3rd/4th team from Lodi coached by Juan Alfaro, and the Joseph Sims 5th/6th team from Elk Grove USD coached by Candace Beam, who both advanced to the Finals on May 9th at Camp Pollack. Good luck to them there! Volunteer judges were from Friends of the Refuge, EGUSD, Refuge staff and the community. Additional participating elementary schools were Florence Markofer, Marion Mix, Union House and Brilliant Beginnings from Elk Grove and Theodore Judah from Folsom. A fun time was had by all!



Friends of Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge serves many functions. **Become a member to help to:**

- **Support** the policies and programs of the Refuge in meeting its objectives in the development and management of the Refuge;
- **Cooperate** with the Refuge in the development of interpretive, educational (including Nature Bowl and our Scholarship), scientific and environmental programs, and of projects for the benefit of the Refuge;
- **Engage** in appropriate commercial and fund-raising activities in support of the Refuge;
- **Stimulate** public and community interest in and support of the Refuge through such measures as volunteer programs, special events;
- **Work** with outside interests, individuals, organizations and public agencies in exploring opportunities to enhance the Refuge lands, resources and programs, and to work to avoid or mitigate potential external threats to the interests of the refuge;
- **Engage** and coordinate with relevant local agencies and private entities to help them develop their plans and programs in a manner that will further rather than compromise the goals of the Refuge in such matters as land use, transportation, waste-water disposal, water use and water quality.

To join the Friends and/or volunteer with us, please go to: habitat@friendsofstonelakes.org



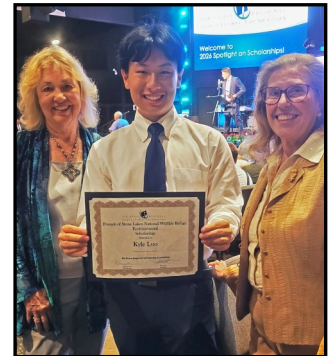
Friends of Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is committed to protecting the Refuge by providing interpretive environmental and conservation education programs. We want to assist students intending to study fields relating to the wise management of wildlife and natural resources, and to promote awareness of the Refuge. Our annual scholarship goes to outstanding high school seniors in the Elk Grove area.

This year's scholarship was dedicated to the memory of Chris Tooker, a longtime Stone Lakes NWR and environmental advocate. Our very deserving recipient in 2026 was Kyle Luo of Cosumnes Oaks High School.



Congratulations Kyle!

**We so appreciate
your dedication
to the Environment!**



Species Spotlight- Western Pond Turtles

The Western Pond Turtle is California's only native, freshwater turtle. They can be spotted on the Refuge's wetlands, sloughs, and lakes. Look for them basking in the sun on logs or floating vegetation, which they need to regulate their body temperature. Western Pond Turtles are classified as a California Species of Special Concern. Their numbers are in decline due to non-native Red-eared Sliders which are pets often released illegally and outcompete Western Pond Turtles for food and sun-basking spots. Also, their numbers are in decline because of habitat destruction and predation by non-native species.

Fun facts: Western Pond Turtles can remain under water for 60 minutes or more. They hibernate in mud at the bottom of ponds for the winter. The mom takes about 10 hours to dig a nest for her eggs.



Baby Western Pond Turtle at Blue Heron Trails in the Refuge



Friends of Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

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