

Tracking the Refuge

a publication for Friends of Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

Spring 2025



In recent years Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge has had to deal with many stumbling blocks. Stone Lakes is an Urban Refuge and Friends of SLNWR is constantly advocating to keep development from encroaching on the Refuge and surrounding agricultural lands that provide habitat for wildlife, especially the migratory birds traveling the Pacific Flyway. The Refuge has been dealing with funding cuts and loss of the ability to replace personnel lost to retirements and relocation. They are now losing more staff and funding. This affects the entire Refuge, and the community. It is a wetland and needs staff to remove invasive plants from the waterways, keep the pumps working to flood the wetlands for migrating bird habitat, monitor the health of the bird populations during epidemics (like the current bird flu), monitor the health of the waterways which have water draining from bordering urban communities, mow open areas for foraging, upkeep of the area open to the public (6am-6pm, 365 days a year), provide educational experiences, and seasonal hunting. Staff reductions do serious damage to all of these activities.

Being able to have the public experience the wonders of nature "in their own backyard" is very important. The Refuge has kiosks which explain the habitat and the wildlife to be seen. The Refuge provides opportunities for busloads of school children to come and learn about the Refuge, conservation and even get a chance to help with planting projects. Seeing the awe and excitement from a group of elementary schoolers when a flock of thousands of Snow Geese rise into the air is an unforgettable experience. The Refuge hosts Nature Bowl semi-finals in the spring (see Page 2), where teams from elementary schools compete in environmentally oriented competitions which instill the benefits of conservation and preservation at an early age, in a very enjoyable way.

For all of the above reasons, Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is very important to the Friends group and the community. Seeing it diminished hurts us all. A lot.

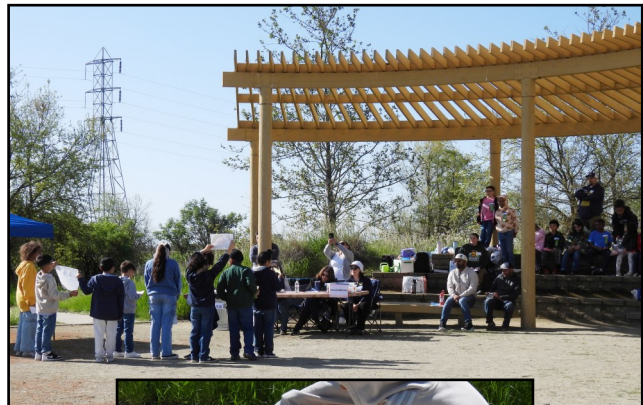
If you want to be involved in supporting our "Local Jewel", find your [Congressman](#) or [Senator](#), then call, write or email your legislators and let them know your personal experiences with the Refuge and why it matters to you.



California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Nature Bowl Semi-Finals were held at Blue Heron Trails in Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge on April 3, 2025. 3rd through 6th graders from 6 local Elementary schools experienced the natural environment through games, problems, puzzles, and exploration. And they all had a wonderful time doing it.

The teams selected to compete in the Finals on May 3, 2025 at Camp Pollock in Sacramento were 3rd/4th grades from Oak Hill Elementary and 5th/6th grades from Latrobe Elementary.

Volunteer judges were from Friends of the Refuge, Elk Grove Unified School District, Cosumnes Community Service District, CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, and the community.



The Swainson's Hawk is a state-listed threatened species in California due to habitat loss. They occur throughout much of the Central Valley.

The Swainson's Hawk is medium-sized, similar to the Red-tailed Hawk, with which it is most often confused. The Swainson's Hawk is designed for soaring and is most often observed in flight. They inhabit grasslands and agricultural regions of western North America during the breeding season and winter in Central Mexico to southern South America. They are known for their long migrations, (some as long as 14,000 miles), and insect-heavy diets.

They are most commonly seen at Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge from March 15 – September 15.



Friends of Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge
website: www.friendsofstonelakes.org
email: habitat@friendsofstonelakes.org
1624 Hood Franklin Road, Elk Grove, CA 95757