



The Splash

Spring/Summer 2022

Upcoming Events

- **Arrowhead Marsh Walk- This Sunday!**
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/bird-walk-at-arrowhead-marsh-where-san-leandro-creek-meets-the-bay-tickets>
- **Cesar Chavez Creek Removal of non-native plants Root Park Sat April 2 10:00am—12:00pm** Root Park with SL Rotary Club and City Council Member C. Lopez <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cesar-chavez-creek-invasive-plant-removal-tickets-306068217277>
- **Family Earth Day—Casa Peralta Sat April 23**
More info to come

This Issue: Arrowhead Marsh - What it means to us

Through its checkered last century and a half, Arrowhead Marsh is an essential resting stop to almost 200 bird species. It's also the mouth of the San Leandro Creek. It's located in the marsh in San Leandro Bay in Martin Luther King Park in Oakland, just adjacent to the airport. It's an important sanctuary for migratory birds in the 8,224,706 square mile flight of that Pacific Americas Flyway. Approximately a billion birds use the predominantly north-south flyway twice a year. The Pacific Flyway stretches from the high arctic, south along the Pacific Ocean to the southernmost tip of the South American mainland. This means birds breed up north and travel to warmer climes across 2 continents. Resting sites along the way are essential to the birds who, like marathon runners must consume large amounts of calories to fuel

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that much exertion. These travelers are reliant on favorable weather conditions and must find sufficient food resources at multiple sites throughout their migratory journey. Birds that travel the Pacific Flyway are primarily water birds. Birds specializing in the areas along the coast, that contain some level of fresh and salty waters – or estuaries. This is the key feature to many bays along their route, such as the San Francisco Bay. Our Bay is actually an estuary. It's fed by the ocean on one hand and fresh waters from our two large rivers, the San Joaquin and the Sacramento. These waterways move Sierra snow melt out west to the Bay and eventually the ocean. The word brackish is a perfect way to explain what our Bay water is –

On Ebird, Arrowhead Marsh is labeled as a hotspot with 196 species identified.

The San Francisco Bay hosts more migrating shorebirds than any other coastal site in the United States, along its 1,000-mile water's edge of nine counties. Even though 85 percent of the wetlands surrounding the San Francisco Bay have been filled or developed, more than 900,000 shorebirds, and millions more ducks and geese, stop for days, weeks or months to eat and rest on the Pacific Flyway, one of four continental migration routes.



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Officers and Board of Directors:

President Michael Gregory, *Vice President* Lary Huls, *Secretary* Jan Woycheshin, *Treasurer* Position Open, *Membership Coordinator* Claudia Taurean, *Member at Large* Mike Vukman
Watershed Awareness Coordinator/Newsletter Editor Susan Levenson

Friends of San Leandro Creek is a 105(c)(3) non-profit organization made up of citizens, students, and businesses dedicated to improving community understanding and awareness of San Leandro Creek and its watershed.

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Here's some of the sorted and successful history of where our creek meets the Bay:

The Ohlone were the 1st inhabitants of what is now Arrowhead Marsh. The area was abundant with nature and nourishment. The marsh at San Leandro Bay attracted ducks and other birds. Their nests provided the Ohlone a steady supply of eggs, and the area was a rich provider of acorns, game, fresh water, and oysters. The Ohlone used the branches from willow trees which grew here to build their homes. Narrow channels connect shallow San Leandro Bay with San Francisco Bay just west. Living along the Bay must have been splendid!

In the 1700's when Spanish explorers first sailed into our Bay, they found many salt marsh ponds between the tidal creeks. Near the mouth of San Leandro Creek was an area of large natural salt ponds, named Crystal Salt Pond on historical maps. This feature was apparently formed by a beach ridge or sand bar. This was a precursor of the Bay's man-made salt ponds.

Over time, the growing Bay Area population demanded more goods and water. In 1874 work began on damming San Leandro Creek to make Lake Chabot. It was a needed water supply for the entire area. During the process, an unexpectedly severe storm breached the partially built earthen dam and washed away 21,000 cubic yards of the dam's clay core along with much of the soil already dumped into the San Leandro Creek below the dam.

Since then people here have filled in a majority of our tidal marshes. From 1,800 acres in the late 1930s around San Leandro Bay, a series of major development projects, including the airport, highway, and Oakland Coliseum complex drastically reduced the wetlands.



In 1961 an organization was founded by visionary Berkeley women called Save the Bay, whose push began for more protective state laws around the Bay. They, The Sierra Club, the Golden Gate Audubon Society and other environmental groups rose up to preserve what was left of our remaining marshes. There were 2,600 acres of tidal marsh where the Oakland International Airport is today. But constant filling, diking and development has all but obliterated most marsh habitat in the East Bay, until in the early 1970s, Golden Gate Audubon Society succeeded in protecting Arrowhead Marsh as a refuge.

Arrowhead Marsh was nearly wiped out twenty-five years ago, when in the mid-1980s, the Port of Oakland was caught dumping fill into the marsh. They and the Army Corps of Engineers had plans to fill hundreds of acres of seasonal wetlands. But environmental groups advocated again in a ten-year legal battle to prevent further filling of wetlands near the airport and Arrowhead Marsh, the last major tidal marsh in San Leandro Bay. This was supported in part by the need for nesting areas for the endangered California Ridgway's (Rallus obsoletus obsoletus; formerly California clapper rail). This area was opened to the public by the East Bay Regional Park District in 1979 as San Leandro Bay Regional Shoreline. In 1992 the park's name was changed to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with more than 50 acres of restored salt marsh. The lawsuits were settled in 1994 and required that \$2.5 million be spent to restore 71 acres at the marsh to create about 31 acres of tidal wetlands and 40 acres of seasonal wetlands and unflooded habitat. Arrowhead Marsh is now approximately 1,220-acres, protected but subject to strong tides. Incidentally, three California Ridgway's rails were spotted at Arrowhead Marsh in 1994. During a bird count in 2020, The State Coastal Conservancy detected 110 Ridgway's rails in San Leandro Bay. It is estimated that only about 10 percent of the Rail's world-wide population remain.

The Port of Oakland removed a dike built in 1969 and dredged an 80-foot-wide channel to allow tidal flows to the marsh. As part of the deal, the port kept 35 acres of filled land near Arrowhead Marsh. In 2003, the Port

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sold the 35-acre parcel for \$16 million to a group headed by Legacy Partners. In October 2004, the Lower Lake Rancheria Koi Nation proposed to build a 2,000-slot casino resort complex, including a seven-story hotel/spa and four-story parking garage on the 35-acres. Despite Koi Nation's willingness to pay the City of Oakland \$30 million a year for 20 years in return for the city's support, Oakland City Council rejected the proposal. I'm proud to say that Alameda County, the cities of Alameda, Berkeley, and San Leandro all opposed the project. It's this joint stance in favor of nature that helped block the casino proposal, introduced just eight months before.

Magic birds were dancing in the mystic marsh. The grass swayed with them, and the shallow waters, and the earth fluttered under them. The earth was dancing with the cranes, and the low sun, and the wind and sky.

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings



Contributing articles:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/adventure/article/estuaries-california>

<https://www.sierraclub.org/san-francisco-bay/history>

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/adventure/article/estuaries-california>

https://www.sfbayjv.org/pdfs/strategy/Restoring_The_Estuary_Full.pdf

<https://goldengateaudubon.org/blog-posts/mlk-shoreline-hotspot>

<https://www.eastbaytimes.com/2005/06/11/koi-nations-oakland-casino-plan-dead-in-the-water/>

<https://www.eastbaytimes.com/2005/02/21/gambling-with-nature/#:~:text=IMPORTANT%20DATES%20IN,acre%20parking%20lot>

<https://www.birdwatchingdaily.com/hotspots/20-arrowhead-marsh-oakland-california/>

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/adventure/article/estuaries-california>

<https://bayareamonitor.org/article/shoring-up-birds-providing-habitat-for-pacific-flyway-migrants/>

<http://explore.museumca.org/creeks/z-arrowhead.html>

<https://alamedasun.com/news/remembering-ohlone-alameda%E2%80%99s-first-inhabitants>

https://spartina.org/documents/InvasiveSpartinaProject_RIRARReport2020.pdf

http://datazone.birdlife.org/userfiles/file/sowb/flyways/1_Pacific_Americas_Factsheet.pdf



We're on the web!
www.fslc.org



Adopt a Bird Box!

The Friends just installed 12 cavity nesting bird boxes at Chabot Park. You can adopt a bird box to help with upkeep and data collection. It's just \$50 per year or \$90 per two year adoption. Send a check to us, and include the name you would like on a plaque placed on a tree in honor of your adoption!

The **San Leandro Creek Watershed Awareness Program** is a comprehensive watershed education program funded by Alameda County Flood Control and Conservation District, with additional support from the City of San Leandro, implemented by Friends of San Leandro Creek. Thank you to the following for your continued support: Alameda County Public Works, The City of San Leandro, and FSLC Members and Volunteers like you.



Note Address Change!!

Friends of San Leandro Creek Membership Application

Yes, I would like to become a member/renew my membership in the following category: (Please circle one)

- Student \$ 1
 - Individual \$5
 - Family \$15
- Non-Profit \$25
 - Business \$100

Make checks and please remit to:

Friends of San Leandro Creek
C/O Public Works
14200 Chapman Rd
San Leandro, CA 94578

Friends of San Leandro Creek is a 501(c) (3) not for profit corporation. Your donations are tax deductible

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

I have a special skill or interest in: _____

