



# FOOTPRINTS

SEASONAL IMPRESSIONS OF CLARK COUNTY WETLANDS PARK

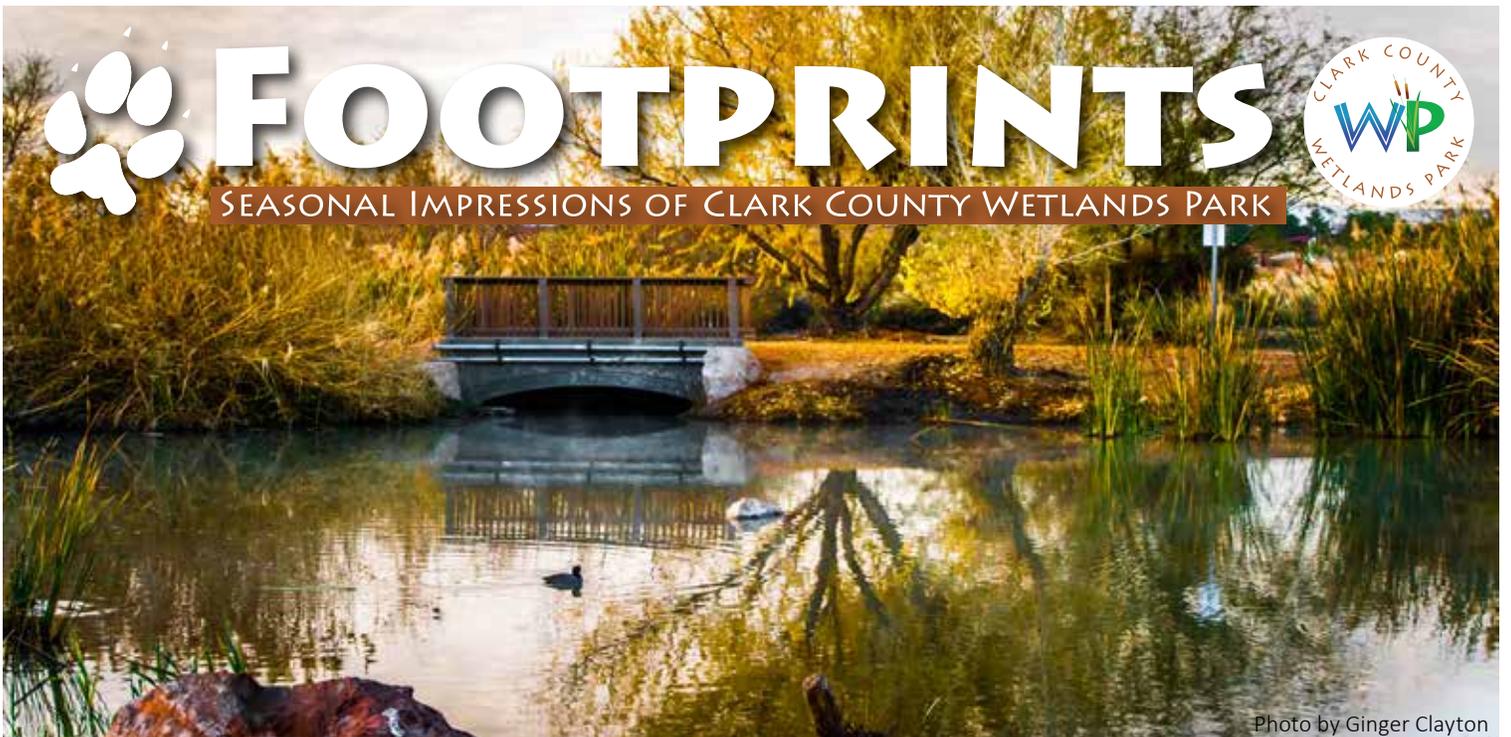


Photo by Ginger Clayton

## SPRING 2018

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*Footprints* is the quarterly newsletter of Clark County Wetlands Park.

Staff contributors include Michelle Baker, CC Carlson, Sheila Glennie, Francheska Lamb, Jody Walker, and Clarice Wheeler.

### CALL FOR PHOTOS!

Want to see your Wetlands Park photo featured in the next newsletter?

**Subject:** "Signs of Life"

Submit your photo(s) to:

**wetlands@clarkcountynv.gov**

by 5pm on May 15, 2018 to be considered. Include your name, date and location of the photo.

**702-455-7522**

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## WETLANDS PARK NATURE CENTER CELEBRATES FIFTH YEAR ANNIVERSARY

### PARK MILESTONES AND SUCCESSES PAVE WAY FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Over the years, the Clark County Wetlands Park has evolved from an unmanaged part of the Las Vegas Valley to a unique and vibrant, 2,900 acre urban wetland oasis and a destination for wildlife and people alike. This year, the Park celebrates the fifth year anniversary of its 45,000 square foot Nature Center. Since the Center's opening in April 2013, the Park has experienced unparalleled growth in visitation. This year it is on track to receive its one millionth visitor.

"Prior to the opening of the Nature Center, staff and volunteers greeted visitors from a small trailer where the parking lot restrooms are today," recalls Liz Bickmore, Senior Program Administrator for the Park. "Thanks to the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) and the vision of County management and the community, the state-of-the-art LEED Gold-certified Nature Center was realized."

In the first year, the Exhibit Hall received 13,000 visitors. In 2017, it had more than 35,000. Bickmore observed,

"With that kind of demand, we have been able to quadruple the number of tours and programs offered. It's amazing how far we've come."

In the coming years, Bickmore notes that Wetlands Park will embark on an ambitious path focusing on visitor experiences and Park improvements. The Park will continue its promise to deliver exceptional programs that are designed to delight participants. To meet that demand, participants may see nominal fees associated with certain signature programs.

The public will have more opportunities to contribute to the Park through the facility rental program, the existing donor wall, a new Wetlands Park Supporter program, and a new retail outlet. Finally, planning and construction of a Natural Play Area, new wayfinding and interpretive waysides are all underway.

"It's an exciting time for the Wetlands Park," says Bickmore. "On behalf of Park staff and volunteers, we look forward to taking this journey with you."

# SEASONAL FLORA & FAUNA FORECAST

Spring is a big burst of life. It is a time of emergence, migration, breeding, and reproduction. It brings longer days and warmer temperatures. Buds are popping and animals are on the move. Here is a sampling of what you may encounter in the Park at this time of year:

**FLORA:** Look for plants to bloom, such as the salt heliotrope, brittlebush, and salt cedar. Look for tree buds to swell and bloom into new green leaves on the Fremont cottonwood and catclaw acacia. Look for aromatic green arrowweed and new growth of common cattail and alkali sacaton.

**FAUNA:** Look to the **ground** for Gambel's quail, greater roadrunner, ants, and crickets.

Look to the **water** for American coot, common gallinule, mallard, Canada goose, pied-billed grebe, great blue heron, and green heron. Listen for the bullfrog.

Look to the **trees and the sky** for northern harrier, yellow-rumped warbler, verdin, black phoebe, and Say's phoebe. Keep your eyes open for both the honey bee and carpenter bee pollinating trees, shrubs, and flowers. 🐝

## SALT HELIOTROPE



## BRITTLEBUSH



## PIED-BILLED GREBE



## NATURE CLOSE-UP: GAMBEL'S QUAIL

**N**amed in recognition of an American naturalist, William Gambel (1821-1849), Gambel's quail can be found in the thorny vegetation of southwestern deserts. Look for groups (coveys) of these gregarious, pear-shaped birds in the early morning and late afternoon when the temperatures are cooler and the birds are active. Coveys tend to be family groups with an adult pair and up to 16 young that stay together well into fall. They can often be seen feeding on vegetation or running between patches of cover. These plump, volley-ball sized birds prefer running to flying. Both males and females sport a bobbing black topknot of feathers atop their small heads.

When alarmed, Gambel's quail will break suddenly into flights covering short distances of up to half a mile. Otherwise flights are confined to short hops up to roosting spots and across

barriers, such as canyons. They will use shrubs and trees as a nighttime roost, resting a few inches to a few feet off the ground, a habit not typically found in other desert quail.

According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, just before her eggs hatch, the female Gambel's quail calls to the chicks still inside the eggs. The chicks cheep to each other and the eggs all

hatch together. Each chick cuts a hole in the largest part of the shell leaving a piece of membrane to serve as a hinge, the chick then pushes on the shell and opens the door it has created.

**Backyard tip:** it is not unusual to find Gambel's quail in the suburbs. These are ground-feeding birds, so they are more likely to visit yards that offer birdseed and water at ground level. 🌿



***A female Gambel's quail with juveniles. In other words, a covey of quail.***

# PROJECT FEEDERWATCH

Migration time is an exciting time at Wetlands Park, especially in terms of birds. There are so many ways to watch and learn. Whether you choose to bird-watch on your own, join a Java Jaunt bird hike, or participate in a citizen science program the diversity and the abundance of birds can be amazing.

Wetlands Park's Project FeederWatch is a winter-long citizen science program that the Park and the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) collaborate on to provide important information to the scientists at Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

When thousands of FeederWatchers in communities throughout North America count birds and send their tallies to the FeederWatch database, the result

is a treasure trove of numbers, which FeederWatch scientists analyze to draw a picture of winter bird abundance, movement, and distribution.

"Wetlands Park is a great stop-over location for migratory birds because it's in the middle of the desert and right along some really important migration routes. There are a ton of birds using the park," says Jess D. Brooks Conservation Educator for NDOW.

Citizen science is really important. When the community is involved and learns about the science of what's around them – they become stewards. And when people care about the earth and all of its creatures, it becomes a part of their lives.

*Project FeederWatch is scheduled*

*every other weekend from 11:00 am – 12:30 pm. through the end of March. Upcoming Park Citizen citizen science programs include International Migratory Bird Day, March 28, and Bio-Blitz, April 28. Check the Wetlands Park website for registration information.* 🌻



**"Young observer" photo by Jody Walker**

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



**Volunteer, Greg Konkin, at a WHO event**

**V**olunteers truly make a difference by doing what they enjoy. We spent some time talking with volunteer Greg Konkin to see what keeps him coming back to Wetlands Park.

### **What is your background?**

I was born and raised in Canada, but have lived in Vegas since 1981. The first half of my career was in hospitality, as a chef. I'm in the second half of my career right now, and am in the purchasing field. I also was an adjunct professor at CSN for ten years. I am an avid traveler- I've visited all seven continents and 165 countries.

### **In what capacities have you been volunteering at the Park?**

Officially, I am a Wetlands Watcher and a WHO team leader; unofficially, I handle a variety of projects in the Park as a handyman.

### **What kinds of things do you do during a typical volunteer shift at Wetlands Park?**

Once a week, I take the golf cart out along the North Loop and South Loop trails. I sweep the paved trails, trim bushes, cover up graffiti, and pick up litter. I also assist Park visitors with directions and Park related questions.

On other days, I cycle the trails out to Lake Las Vegas, reporting any issues on the Watch Report. I do side projects, such as, setting mile markers and direction signs, performing asphalt repair, and painting gates, bollards, and fencing.

### **Why do you like volunteering at the Park and what advice would you give someone thinking about volunteering?**

Volunteering helps me fill some of my free time. I also enjoy working outdoors. But more importantly, it feels rewarding to give back to the community and help others enjoy the Park.

For those interested in for a volunteer position at the Park, there are so many different opportunities, both indoors and out. It's a great way to be part of a team that is genuinely interested in improving the Park experience for the community. Your efforts will never go unnoticed, and the Park staff is greatly appreciative of the work that volunteers do. It's also a perfect opportunity to meet new people and possibly make new friends, both visitors and fellow volunteers.

### **What is your favorite spot in the Park?**

My favorite spot is at the top of "the wall", which is about midpoint on the North Loop trail. The area is very tranquil, with a great view of the city skyline on one side and an inspiring desertscape looking the other way. 🌻

# WETLANDS WALKERS ON THE MOVE

Walking is good for one's physical health, and a walk in nature is even better!

**Wetlands Walkers**, a group of **86** health and nature oriented individuals, track their miles whenever they walk Park trails and by doing so earn rewards at various milestones. As a group, their mileage is tallied to reach a yearly goal matching the migration distances of one of the Park's visiting species. In 2018 the Walkers are recognizing the

black-necked stilt and have a collective goal of trekking 5,000 miles. To date, the walkers have traveled **1,202 miles**, of the goal!

*To learn more about the Wetlands Walkers program and the black-necked stilt, stop by the Exhibit Hall in the Nature Center.* 🌿



## FUN BLACK-NECKED STILT FACTS:

- The black-necked stilt is found along edges of shallow water and is an abundant shorebird of American wetlands and coastlines.
- In the fall, inland birds will migrate to the coast with some migrating as far south as Mexico then returning in the spring.
- They wade for their food, and will only swim or dive when under duress. 🌿

# PACK IT IN, PACK IT OUT

Spring is the perfect time to stretch your legs and get outside! As the days get longer and weather is nicer, expect Park visitation to increase. While the Park generally doesn't encourage eating out on the trails, sometimes you just need to rest and eat a snack. The key is to leave nothing behind by being mindful of the garbage you make and properly disposing of it.

The Park actually sits at the lowest

part of the Vegas Valley. So any litter you make in the Park or anywhere else in the Valley may ultimately find its way to the Las Vegas Wash. In fact, in some cases all it takes is one good rain or a gusty wind to move garbage into its direction. If you find yourself without immediate access to a trash receptacle, collect your trash and take it with you for disposal later. Some visitors using the Park trails even bring extra trash bags with them to

pick up the refuse they come across.

While discarded trash is bad for people, it's also harmful to wildlife. Animals preparing nests might use toxic litter in preparing their new home. Garbage can potentially harm and even kill wildlife if they ingest it or are unfortunate enough to get caught in it. Please help others keep the Park grounds clean – your fellow Park visitors and inhabitants will thank you for it! 🌿

Watercolor by Jody Walker



## CALL FOR WETLANDS PARK ARTWORK!

Have you created artwork in one of our Studio WP Art Programs that you would like to share? Want to see your artwork featured in the next newsletter?

Submit your artwork(s) in digital format to: **wetlands@clarkcountynv.gov** by 5pm on May 15, 2018 to be considered. Include your name, date and the Studio WP art program in which the piece was created.



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