



FOOTPRINTS

SEASONAL IMPRESSIONS OF CLARK COUNTY WETLANDS PARK



Photo by Philip Martini

SUMMER 2017

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Footprints is the quarterly newsletter of Clark County Wetlands Park. Staff contributors include Michelle Baker, CC Carlson, Sheila Glennie, Alice Hulslander, Francheska Lamb, Jody Walker, and Clarice Wheeler.

CALL FOR PHOTOS!

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

Subject: "Flight"

Submit your photo(s) to: wetlands@clarkcountynv.gov by 5pm on August 15, 2017 to be considered. Include your name, date and location of the photo.

CELEBRATE SUMMER WITH COOL EVENTS

Despite the soaring temperatures in the Las Vegas Valley this time of year, there are lots of exciting opportunities to enjoy Clark County Wetlands Park. In fact, the Park is celebrating its 2017 summer season with a series of "cool" events, programs, and activities that are both educational and fun for the whole family. Best of all, it is all FREE!

SUMMER OPEN HOUSE

The Park kicks off the season with its **Summer Open House** July 1 from 9 am to 12 pm. Held entirely indoors, or within the shade of the Nature Center, the morning will be packed with fun games, crafts, and exhibits. Learn about the Park and its wildlife habitats, as well as meet staff from over a dozen local agencies who will be sharing summer fun to be had all around the region.

SUMMER LEARNIN'

Discover the flora and fauna found in this corner of the Mojave Desert by attending an interactive **Wildlife Talk** presented by the Nevada Department of Wildlife on July 21 and August 18, from 11 am to 12:30 pm. Reserve a spot

for these programs on the Park website or by calling the Nature Center. There is also more to learn at **Wetlands-U** walk-in events. On July 8, learn about the various endangered species found in the Park, and on August 12, dig into the region's compelling geology. Led by knowledgeable Park staff, these programs are held from 10 am to 12 pm. For history buffs, an **Evening Lecture** about the "Old Spanish Trail" will take place on Thursday, August 17 at 6 pm.

SUMMER ART PROGRAMS

Explore the artistic side of nature with **Watercolor for Adults** classes on July 29 ("Butterflies") and August 26 ("Branches and Leaves") from 11 am to 12:30 pm. There's also a children's art program, **Make Your Own Art Button** on July 15 from 10 to 2 pm.

COOL SUMMER FUN

The Nature Center is a *cool* place to be all summer. Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy in the air conditioned **Picnic Café**. The **Exhibit Hall** is open every day from 9 am to 4 pm. Register for programs by visiting the website at www.ClarkCountyNV.gov/WetlandsPark. 🌿

SEASONAL FLORA & FAUNA FORECAST

Summer is when all animals, including humans, take advantage of the warm weather. It is the hottest of the four seasons, when days are longer and nights are shorter. Plants grow and provide food for herbivores. Herbivores gain weight and provide food for carnivores. Mammals and birds raise their young. Insects go through their life cycles and lay eggs. The following is a sampling of what visitors may encounter this summer, but its best to come early in the day, before it gets too hot.

FLORA: Look for blooming plants, such as sacred datura, salt heliotrope, sunflower, and desert willow.

Look for plants to be green, such as salt grass, tamarisk, and Goodding willow.

FAUNA: Look for lots of insects, such as ants, aphids, bees, butterflies, dragonflies, damselflies, funnel web spiders, tarantula hawks, and wasps.

Insects attract bats that can be seen flying around at dusk.

Look to the ground for Gambel's quails, greater roadrunners, and desert cottontails.

Look to the water for American coots, common gallinules, green and great blue herons, and turtles.

Look to the trees and the sky for black-tailed gnatcatchers, great-tailed grackles, hummingbirds, northern mockingbirds, verdins, and turkey vultures. 🌿

TEXAS SPINY SOFT SHELL TURTLE



AMERICAN COOT



TARANTULA HAWK ON MILKWEED



NATURE CLOSE-UP: CARPENTER BEE

As the weather warms, bugs abound and buzz about. Bumbling around the flowers and trees are what appear to be massive, humming, shiny black insects. A closer look reveals the carpenter bee!

These bees are common in the southwestern United States and are frequently seen in the Park during the summer. Carpenter bees are often misidentified as black bumble bees. While a carpenter bee may look similar to a bumblebee, carpenter bees actually belong to the genus *Xylocopa* while bumblebees belong to the genus *Bombus*. The two can be distinguished by looking at their bums: if the abdomen is shiny and bald, it's a carpenter bee! In this species, females are iridescent black while males are covered in golden fuzz and have green eyes.

Carpenter bees are most active in the spring and summer when they emerge after a long winter from a warm hiding

spot. As they fly around, they are often on the hunt for nest sites, food sources, and mates.



A carpenter bee retrieves nectar from a desert willow flower

They are solitary bees, meaning there are no queens and no colonies, as opposed to "social" species like bumblebees and honey bees. Carpenter bees are adept pollinators and are capable of "buzz pollination" where they contract their flight muscles to produce vibrations that release tightly packed pollen from flowers.

What makes these bees so good at woodworking? When carpenter bees mate, the females will burrow into wood to lay their eggs. Visitors who hang around a fallen tree and sit quietly might be able to see them coming and going from a nest. Despite their large size and imposing sounds, carpenter bees are fairly docile. Male bees lack a stinger entirely and females will only sting when they feel especially threatened. Generally speaking, unlike other kinds of bees and flying insects, there is nothing to fear when encountering these gentle giants! 🌿

WETLANDS: HANDS ON! PROGRAM RECEIVES AWARD

This April, the Park was awarded the “Program of Excellence Award in the Category of Outdoor” for its **Wetlands: Hands On!** community stewardship program. A presentation of awards was held April 19 in Reno at the Nevada Parks and Recreation Society Annual Conference. The Park is proud to receive this award and hopes it will help bring attention to its growing volunteer stewardship efforts.

Since the creation of Wetlands: Hands On! (a.k.a. WHO!), thousands of people have participated in improving the Park by planting native species, working on trails, picking up trash and graffiti, and removing invasive plants. Community volunteers are led by staff and dedicated WHO! Team Leads (also volunteers) who truly demonstrate the spirit of

stewardship and the joy of giving back to the community.



The use of social media, has helped draw participants from around the valley as the Park encourages single participants, as well as groups, to join in. Outdoor enthusiasts, families, and people of all ages and abilities have shown a deep commitment to their community by donating their time and sweat.

For many people, WHO! is their first introduction to the Park. This is an opportunity to learn about the history of the Las Vegas Wash and its future. Many return to the park to take advantage of the Exhibit Hall, programs, or just to enjoy the trails.

If you would like to learn more about Wetlands: Hands On! contact us at wetlands@clarkcountynv.gov 🌱



Dedicated and hard-working volunteers remove graffiti to help clean up the Park

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Volunteer Debbie Oldach greets visitors in the Exhibit Hall

Volunteers truly make a difference by doing what they enjoy. We spent some time talking with volunteer Debbie Oldach to see what keeps her coming back to Wetlands Park.

How long have you lived in the Las Vegas Valley?

Five Years. Before Las Vegas, I lived in Erie, PA for 65 years.

Are you employed or retired?

I am currently retired. When I lived in Erie, I worked in a hospital, St. Vincent’s Health Center, for 42 years.

How did you come to volunteer at the Park?

I was new in Las Vegas and didn’t know anyone. I wanted to meet people and do something to give back. I talked with Wetlands Park volunteers while visiting the Park and they convinced me to join. I’ve been volunteering here almost four and a half years.

In what capacities have you been volunteering at the Park?

I started as Educational facilitator leading school field trips. Now I also work in the Exhibit Hall and at different special events like “Haunt the Wetlands.” I also sometimes help Park staff with Discovery Walks.

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

In the Exhibit Hall, I greet people, hand out maps and introduce visitors to the best routes to walk. When I am out walking, I like to point out interesting things in the Park. And as an Education Facilitator, I lead school children on field trips.

Why do you like volunteering at the Wetlands?

I like the idea that wetlands exists here in the desert and I enjoy teaching people about the Park. I like it here and want others to like it, too.

What advice would you give someone thinking of volunteering at Wetlands Park?

Do it! There are so many different programs and activities to get involved; you will be sure to find something that suits you.

What is your favorite spot in Wetlands Park?

Grandma’s Pond (a.k.a. Upper West Pond), it’s so calm and peaceful there. 🌱

WETLANDS WALKERS ON THE MOVE

Walking is good for your physical health, and a walk in nature is even better! **Wetlands Walkers** track their individual miles whenever they visit the trails and earn rewards at various milestones. As a group, the mileage is tallied to reach a yearly goal matching the migration distances of one of the Park's visiting species. This year, the park is recognizing the osprey, and the program has a collective goal of walking 5,000 miles.

So far this year, Walkers have traveled **3,287 miles** of the goal!

The osprey is unique among North American raptors for its diet of live fish and ability to dive into water as much as to two to three feet to catch them.

Sometimes referred to as fish eagles, sea hawks, river hawks, or fish hawks, ospreys are commonly seen in the Park diving for fish near the Las Vegas Wash!

To learn more about the Wetlands Walkers program and the osprey, stop by the Exhibit Hall in the Nature Center. ♻️



Photo by Jody Walker

BIRDS, MAMMALS, AND YOU HOW TO SURVIVE IN THE DESERT HEAT

How do animals survive in the summer heat? Is there any difference between how *animal* animals and *human* animals deal with these extremes? Actually, desert birds and mammals have developed many adaptive strategies for coping with high temperatures and limited water. Some ways are remarkably similar to humans.

Avoid the hottest part of the day. Many birds and mammals are *crepuscular*, meaning they are active

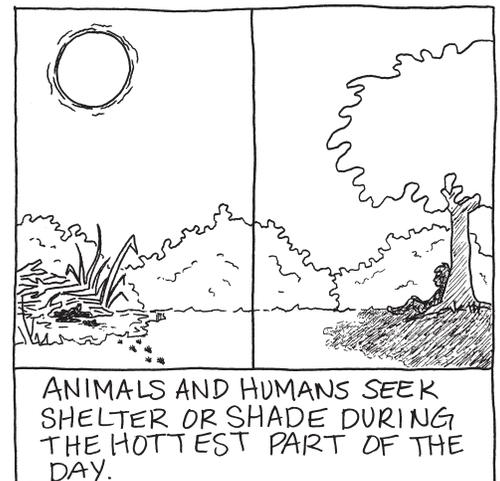
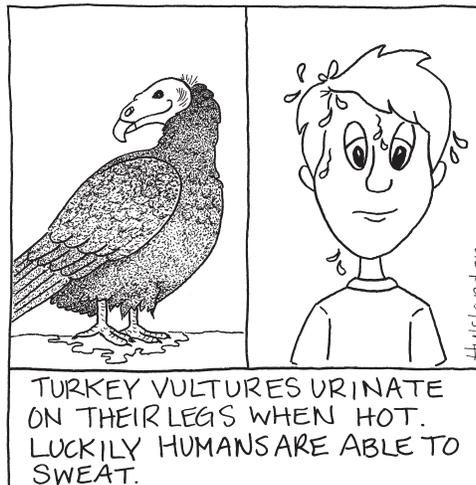
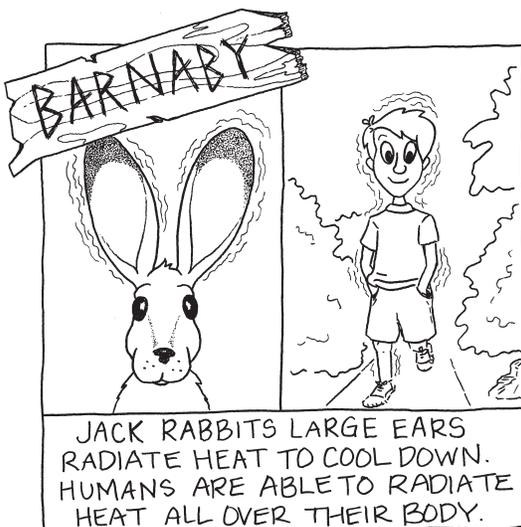
at dusk and dawn. Being outside only during the cooler parts of the day helps humans avoid heat exhaustion as well.

Seek out shade. A prairie falcon may nest on a north facing cliff to avoid the hot sun of the south face. Wide brim hats are a good way for humans to bring shade with them.

Wear the right clothes. Desert mammals have light colored coats that are thinner in the summer. Sunscreen and light, loose clothing protects a

human's skin from the sun but allows beneficial air flow for sweat evaporation.

Hydrate and stay cool. A desert tortoise can hold its urine a really long time, reducing the need for frequent hydration. Coyotes will pant to cool off. Humans are good at sweating to keep cool but poor at conserving water. On a hot day in the desert, a human will lose as much as three gallons of water through sweat. It's always a good idea to carry a water bottle at all times! ♻️



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