

FOOTPRINTS

SEASONAL IMPRESSIONS OF CLARK COUNTY WETLANDS PARK

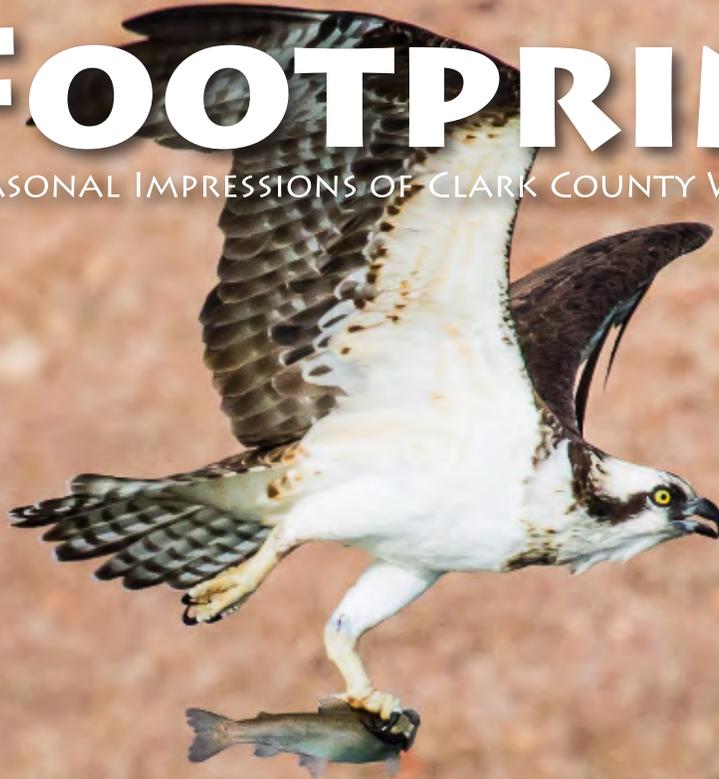


Photo by Jamaal Aikens

FALL 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, Kathryn Jones, Francheska Lamb, Jody Walker, and Clarice Wheeler.

CALL FOR PHOTOS!

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

Subject: "Silhouettes"

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

HAUNT THE WETLANDS... IT'S BA-ACK!

A whole day of ghostly, family-friendly good times is planned for Wetlands Park's 4th annual Haunt the Wetlands Friday, October 27. This year the free event is completely walk-in, with no registration required. Participants young and old are encouraged to wear costumes, though adults are asked to not wear face masks. All activities take place at the Nature Center, 7050 Wetlands Park Lane.

Kids and parents can traipse through the eerie Haunted Maze of Reeds, which is open from dawn until dusk. During the day, participants can enjoy a spooky self-guided story walk through the tall, rustling grasses that are specially groomed for the event.

From 10 am until 2 pm, there are non-stop activities for kids and parents, including Scary Story Times, Tricky Face Painting, and Witchy Crafts, all highlighting ghoulish Halloween themes. Then, as the daylight hours wane, the Nature Center and Park Preserve will be transformed into a far creepier, "interactive" venue.

From 5 pm to 8 pm, participants can explore the Haunted Maze of

Reeds, where they can expect to meet Halloween characters designed to thrill and delight one and all. They can also take a Night Stroll through the Tamarisk Forest to encounter some of the most macabre Creatures of the Night that are actually found within the Park Preserve.



Wetlands Park witch greeting visitors inside the haunted maze

In lieu of an admission fee for Haunt the Wetlands, Wetlands Park asks participants to bring donations for the Village of Hope Las Vegas, an afterschool program located on site at Whitney Elementary School. The charity provides wraparound academic and social services for students and their families. To learn more about Village of Hope, please visit www.villageofhopelv.org.

SEASONAL FLORA & FAUNA FORECAST

Fall is a transition time for many plants and animals, a time to fatten up and store food. Night arrives earlier, temperatures begin to fall, and deciduous trees begin to shed their leaves. The following is a sampling of what you may encounter in the park this time of year:

FLORA: look for plants to **transition from blooming & green to browning**, such as the Fremont cottonwood, marsh fleabane, tamarisk, and sandbar & seep willows.

Some plants will remain green throughout the fall, such as salt grass, iodine bush, and the Goodding's willow.

Look for lots of **seed pods** either brown and/or opened, such as bulrush, four-wing saltbush, screwbean mesquite, quailbush, and milkweed.

FAUNA: continue to **look for insects**, such as ants, butterflies, dragonflies,

damselflies, and wasps. In particular, keep your eyes open for monarch and queen butterflies and their chrysalis and caterpillars.

Look to the ground for Gambel's quail, greater roadrunner, desert cottontail, and northern flicker.

Look to the water for American coots, common gallinules, herons, double-crested cormorants, killdeer, and turtles.

Look to the trees and the sky for black-tailed gnatcatcher, hummingbirds, belted kingfisher, northern mockingbird, phainopepla, loggerhead shrike, vultures, hawks, and falcons. 🌸



ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD



BLUE DASHER DRAGONFLY



NATURE CLOSE-UP: MONARCH BUTTERFLY

Autumn is here! The changing colors of the trees are not the only place you'll see some wonderful orange hues. With a little luck, you might see the distinguished monarch butterfly gliding through the park.

Monarchs are best known for their extraordinary migration across North America to overwinter in the southern United States and Mexico, where they will rest in incredible aggregations that can contain tens of millions of individuals.

Monarchs are excellent fliers and can fly up to 10 miles per hour to avoid potential predators. The butterflies that make the migration south will utilize air currents and thermals to help carry them to their southern wintering grounds. Adult monarchs that make the migration can live up to six months, while those that are actively reproducing in the summer may only

live about two months.

As a caterpillar, the monarch's food of choice comes from the milkweed plant. Milkweed plants contain toxins that are dangerous for many animals to eat, so when a monarch caterpillar eats the milkweed, their bodies become toxic as well. The toxins will

remain in the monarch's body for the rest of its life. If an animal chooses a monarch butterfly for a meal, it may vomit and will likely never decide to eat a monarch again. The distinguished pattern of the lovely monarch butterfly is a warning to most predators that they are not that tasty a snack. 🌿



A monarch butterfly resting for a moment

ARCHAEOLOGY AND WETLANDS PARK

Over thousands of years, both the Las Vegas Wash and the surrounding wetlands have been important resources for many different cultures and communities. Today, thanks to Clark County, Bureau of Reclamation, Southern Nevada Water Authority, and state and federal agencies, Wetlands Park is being preserved as an archaeological district, providing historical and environmental benefits that Park visitors can enjoy.

Archaeologists have determined that the Anasazi, the Mojave (also called Yuman), and the Southern Paiute tribes all lived in the Valley as far back as 600 A.D. While the Anasazi lived in the northern part of the Valley, the Southern Paiute considered the entire Valley their

sacred land. The Yuman focused their civilization primarily along the Las Vegas and Duck Creek washes.

As parts of the Park's archaeology district have been explored, interesting pieces of information have been uncovered. For example, for hundreds of years native people have claimed that maize was a primary crop, though there was no proof. Fortunately, a dig at the Wetlands Park in 2014 confirmed this fact. According to James Kangas, an archaeologist for the Bureau of Reclamation, "The good preservation of archaeological deposits [in the Park]... have produced a substantial record for the collection and processing of wild plants for food, including mesquite and cattails, as well as the cultivation of maize."

It's likely that the Park and Las Vegas Wash will help archaeologists and historians better understand the region's past as well as provide a major role in the Valley's future development. 🐾



An archaeologist using a rocking sifting screen.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Volunteer Jerry Stein out on the trails.

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

How long have you lived in the Las Vegas Valley?

I've lived here 15 years.

Where did you live previously?

My wife Darlene and I lived in a little town Ridgecrest, CA on the western

edge of the Mojave Desert.

Are you currently working or retired?

I am currently retired, though I worked as a family law attorney for the last 10 years before retirement; that was after deciding to go to law school in my late 40s.

How did you come to volunteer at the Park?

Volunteering at the Wetlands Park was almost an accident. I've been a walker and back-packer most of my life. Our house backs up to the Park, and as we ended up with a dog that needed regular walks, I started walking in the Park every day.

How long have you been volunteering at the wetlands park?

While I actually started walking the Park in 2009, I officially became a volunteer in 2014.

In what capacities have you been volunteering at the Park?

I mostly volunteer in the Wetlands

Watch program (I walk 6 days a week) and occasionally for special events such as the Summer Open House. I also regularly attend the educational events.

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

I mostly observe, document, and take photos as I walk.

Why do you like volunteering at the Wetlands?

I enjoy the contact with nice people. And, as I have a serious data addiction, I like to learn more about the Wetlands Park. It is quiet and peaceful and there are lots of interesting critters.

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

Volunteer and have fun, it's almost impossible not to enjoy.

What is your favorite spot in the Park?

The Gooddings Willow Grove and various "vegetation tunnels" along the trails. 🌿

WETLANDS WALKERS ON THE MOVE

Walking is good for your physical health, and a walk in nature is even better!

Wetlands Walkers, a group of 68 health and nature oriented individuals, track their miles whenever they walk the 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.

This year, the park is recognizing the osprey, and the program has a collective goal of walking 5,000 miles.

So far this year, the walkers have traveled **4,885 miles**, just 115 miles short of their goal!

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



FUN OSPREY FACTS

Ospreys are a valuable indicator species for a few reasons:

1. They are at the top of the food chain, which means they're likely to be affected by any environmental changes.
2. They are highly visible, making them easy to monitor.
3. Ospreys main food source is fish and they only hunt close to the nest. So if something is affecting the fish population, the osprey population will also be impacted.

WILDFIRE PREVENTION: CLOSE TO HOME

Wildfires in Wetlands Park can be fast moving and destructive. Wildfires can be caused by natural events, such as lightning. However, the majority of wildfires are the result of human carelessness. While most of us know what fire can do to our homes, what actually happens when a wildfire occurs inside the Park? Whose home is affected?

When there is a fire, creatures in the park are impacted by a loss of habitat, and the burrows, trees, and grasses they

live in cannot be quickly replaced. In addition, the food that they eat is likely reduced or eliminated.

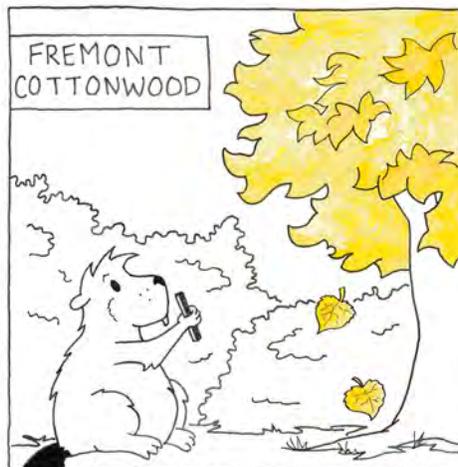
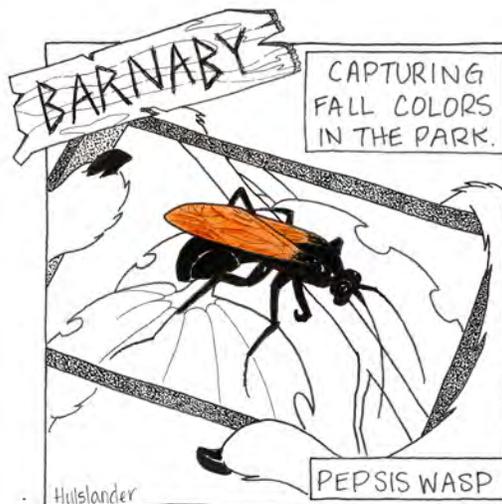
How can visitors help prevent wildfires in Wetlands park? Here are some simple reminders:

- Don't dump or leave trash in the Park. This can provide fuel for fires.
- Don't smoke in the Park. Ashes and cigarette butts can quickly cause fires in dry brush and leaves, especially if it is windy.
- No open campfires or grills are allowed in the Park. They are a

recipe for an out-of-control fire, especially if smoldering charcoals or embers are carelessly discarded or left to burn out on the ground.

- No shooting is allowed in the Park, this includes fireworks. Both can cause sparks and potentially combust with dry leaves and bushes.

Wetlands Park is where everyone can go to enjoy nature at its best. By keeping this great Park safe, we are protecting important wildlife habitat and the homes of nearby residents.



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