



# FOOTPRINTS

SEASONAL IMPRESSIONS OF CLARK COUNTY WETLANDS PARK



Photo by David Walker

## WINTER 2018-19

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**Clark County Wetlands Park** preserves and enhances **natural** and **cultural** resources and provides **educational, recreational,** and **research opportunities** for the **public**.

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Cover photo "Weather in Action" entry submitted by David Walker.

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## FIND YOURSELF AT WETLANDS PARK

**T**ime in nature is rejuvenating. Just spending a bit of your day in the Wetlands Park makes you feel like you're in another place, not Las Vegas, and not what we think of as the desert. Water is the element that makes this place unique; a green oasis with native plants, trees, grasses, flowers, and wildlife. Spend some time exploring, walking the pathways, gazing across the water, or sitting under a tree. There are many areas within the park that really feel special. Whether you're taking a jog, reflecting, writing, painting, birding, or practicing your photography we hope you'll make a connection to Wetlands Park and find your favorite spot.

Many people have discovered special areas in the park to have their family pictures taken. The light can be really amazing at sunrise and sunset. Grab a map or visit the Wetlands Park website and plan your outing, keep in mind that the Park is only open daylight hours from dawn until dusk. Favorite spots for sunset photography are at the Big Bridge, the Mesquite Trees along the Mesquite Way trail, and across the water at the Boardwalk Pond. Excellent sunrise photography opportunities are along the Wetlands loop trail between Pabco and

Wells trailheads.

Remember that a permit is required for professional photography or filming. If you're looking for time and space to breathe, dream, and connect to the earth, find yourself at Wetlands Park.

For professional permits call (702) 455-3933 or visit [www.clarkcountynv.gov/business-license/film-permits](http://www.clarkcountynv.gov/business-license/film-permits)



Photo by Sheila Glennie  
*Catching a peaceful moment*



Photo by Jody Walker  
*Cyclists pausing at the Big Weir Bridge to observe wildlife*

# SEASONAL FLORA & FAUNA FORECAST

Winter brings shorter days, longer nights, and colder weather. It is a time of rest or dormancy for numerous plants and animals. Many animals develop adaptations and different behaviors to survive the winter. Some migrate, some hibernate, some store food, and a few even change color or thickness of fur or plumage. A handful of plants let their upper part go dormant, but their roots are still protected underground. Plants that bloom in the winter are scarce. Here is a sampling of what you may encounter in the Park this time of year:

**FLORA:** Look for plants that transition from browning to dormant, such as the marsh fleabane, iodine bush, honey mesquite, and desert willow. Look for brown seed pods on the screwbean mesquite and quailbush.

Within the mesquite trees, look for the

female desert mistletoe plant to produce white to red berries to be eaten by the phainopepla bird.

**FAUNA:** Look to the ground for Gambel's quail, great-tailed grackle, and northern flicker.

Look to the water for American coot, common gallinule, mallard, ring-neck duck, great egret, and American wigeon.

Look to the trees and the sky for northern mockingbird, phainopepla, loggerhead shrike, white-crowned sparrow, northern harrier, and red-tailed hawk. 🌿

## PHAINOPEPLA



Photo by Sheila Glennie

## GREAT EGRET



Photo by Sheila Glennie

## GAMBEL'S QUAIL



Photo by Sheila Glennie

# NATURE CLOSE-UP: NORTHERN FLICKER

As you walk through the Park, don't be surprised if you flush one of these handsome, large woodpeckers up from the ground. It's not where you'd expect to find a woodpecker, but northern flickers prefer to find their food on the ground. Once flushed, flickers will often perch erect on thin horizontal branches instead of leaning against their tails on a trunk as other woodpeckers might.

Northern flickers eat mainly ants and other insects. Although they can hammer on wood like other woodpeckers, flickers will dig in the dirt with their slightly curved bill to find ants and once found it uses its long barbed tongue to lap them up. Their tongues can dart out 2 inches beyond the end of the bill to snare prey. Flickers will even go after ants underground, where the nutritious larvae live, hammering at the soil the way other woodpeckers drill into

wood.

Look for flicker nest holes 6 to 20 feet (sometimes up to 100 feet) off the ground in dead tree trunks and large branches. Unlike other woodpeckers, flickers will reuse cavities they or another species excavated in a previous year. Northern flickers have even been known to nest in the abandoned burrows of belted kingfishers or bank swallows. Males will defend their nesting territory with calling, drumming, and many aggressive displays.

Although widespread and common throughout North America, recent surveys indicate declines in population since the 1960s. It is possible that introduced starlings compete with flickers for nesting sites, driving the flickers away.

Here in the west and at Wetlands Park, you will find the red-shafted northern flicker, which has a striking

salmon color under its wings and tail. The brown plumage is richly patterned with black spots, bars, and crescents. Males have a red mustache as seen in the picture below 🌿



Photo by Philip Martini

**A Northern Flicker perched in a tree here at Wetlands Park**

# HAUNT THE WETLANDS 2018

**W**ait! The Wetlands is Haunted? Well, at least for one day and night it is. This year's "Haunt the Wetlands" event, held on Friday October 26, was filled with daytime fun and night-time spookiness for over 2,000 visitors. Participants got a taste of Halloween in the natural world with opportunities to see real snakes, spiders, lizards, rats, scorpions, bats, owls, badgers, foxes, coyotes, beavers, and raccoons. Some of the big creatures were museum specimens staged along a looping trail for the "Creatures of the Night Hike" in the Nature Preserve. Hags and hobgoblins shared a bit of gruesome information to everyone passing by. The outdoor haunted maze was amazing.



Photo by David Walker

## **Families learning about kit foxes on the Creatures of the Night Walk**

Imagine trying to find your way through the twists and turns of a maze cut into 10 feet high reeds. It's a dark place with only the moon for light, where every nook has spooky scenes and every cranny has creepy surprises.

Daytime activities, for the younger crowd or more faint of heart, included

lumberjack camp stories, crafts, a fun story walk, the haunted maze in sunlight, and pretty cool green-screen photos.

New night time activities included professional face painting, mad scientist hands-on experiments and black light room. Science always begins with wonder and seeing people discover something new and really cool was the best.

And for us, Halloween isn't complete without being mesmerized by a fortune teller and holding a giant hissing cockroach. Yeeek! Hope to see you next year! 🐾

**JOIN US FOR OUR  
NEXT EVENT:  
WORLD MIGRATORY  
BIRD DAY March 16**

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



**Volunteer Nancy Erlanson**

**P**assionate volunteers are priceless. They are the heart and voice of Wetlands Park. Nancy Erlanson is one such volunteer. We were able to catch up with her to find out what it is that keeps her coming back year after year.

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

I was born in Des Moines, Iowa but I grew up in Minnesota. I went to Shippensburg College in Pennsylvania and obtained my degree in geo-environmental science. I taught at Renfrew Environmental Institute from 1996 to 2000. Because I lived near the Appalachian Trail, I had the opportunity to hike the trail daily. I even went hiking at night. The experience changed my life.

We moved to Las Vegas in 2000 because of my husband's work. I came from an area with great diversity to an arid, dry desert landscape. It was a culture shock, but I came to love the desert and all its beauty.

We have two children, a boy and a girl. My son lives here in Las Vegas and my daughter lives in Tennessee. We have two beautiful grandchildren.

### **How did you come to volunteer at the Park?**

In 2001, I started teaching at the Desert Demonstration Garden that is now the Springs Preserve. I became friends with a staff member who taught me all about desert plant life. In 2002, she introduced me to Wetlands Park. In 2007, I decided to become a volunteer as an education facilitator for the school field trips.

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

I have been leading field trips for children, outreach programs, and tabling events.

### **What kinds of things do you do during**

### **a typical volunteer shift as an education facilitator?**

I love to keep children involved and excited about nature. I try to help them understand nature, knowledge they can use later in life. At the same time, I have to keep them focused, which can be a job in itself. As a separate learning experience, I teach them not to litter and to clean-up anytime they see litter around. Leave no trace!

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

I want to share my love and passion for nature with children. I love to see their faces when they discover how fun nature is. Their expressions light up over the smallest discovery. If you are a person excited by nature, then take that passion and pass it on. Get involved somewhere that will let you share that excitement. Mandalay Bay has a volunteer program and I always recommend the Wetlands to staff when they put together places for their employees to volunteer. It is my way of giving back to the community. 🌱

# 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 **135** health and nature oriented individuals, track their miles whenever they walk Park trails and 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 **5,098 miles** exceeding their goal!

With a new year approaching, Wetlands Walkers will be recognizing the **Northern Flicker in 2019** and the goal will be 5,000 miles. The northern flicker is a large, handsome woodpecker often spotted at Wetlands Park in the winter.



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THE NORTHERN FLICKER IS ONE OF THE FEW WOODPECKER SPECIES THAT MIGRATE.

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Start the new year off right by signing up for the **Wetlands Walkers 2019 Kick-off Hike** on **January 6** at **1:00 pm** at the Nature Center.

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

## SHARE THE TRAILS

Now that the weather has cooled down, it's time again to enjoy nature at Wetlands Park without all the heat! There are many ways to enjoy the trails at Wetlands Park. The Nature Preserve, for example, is perfect for walking and observing wildlife. There are numerous trails, some shaded, some in brilliant sunshine, but all offering beautiful sights of nature at every turn. For safety sake, make sure everyone has water with them, and even though it is cooler, hats, sunglasses, and

sunscreen are always helpful.

Wetlands Park is also a perfect place for a bike ride. While the Nature Preserve trails are not open to cyclists, all other trails are shared use paths. When biking, use the rule of staying on the right and signaling when you are about to pass a hiker or another biker.

Even though dogs are not permitted in the Nature Preserve, there are miles of trails for hikers with canine companions. Consider going to Duck Creek, Pabco, or Wells Trailheads but

remember dogs must be on leash at all times. Enjoy the park by staying on the trails and being aware of fellow trail users. Join a Wetlands Park nature guide for a guided dog friendly 'Woof Walk,' which occurs mostly on Sundays. Refer to our program guide for exact date, time, and registration information.

Horses are allowed on the unpaved trails of the Wetlands Loop Trail, Pabco and Sunrise Trailheads. No matter how you travel, on foot, hoof, or bike tires, everyone is invited to enjoy nature at its finest at the Wetlands Park. 🌿

## CALL FOR WETLANDS PARK PHOTOS!

Want to see your Wetlands Park photo featured in an upcoming newsletter?

**Photo Subject:** "Call of the Wild"

Submit your high resolution photo(s) to: [wetlands@clarkcountynv.gov](mailto:wetlands@clarkcountynv.gov) by 5pm on February 15, 2019 to be considered. Include your name, date, and location of the photo.



Vermillion Flycatcher by Claudia Drake

## 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 an upcoming newsletter?

Submit your high resolution artwork(s) in digital format to: [wetlands@clarkcountynv.gov](mailto:wetlands@clarkcountynv.gov) Include your name, date and the Studio WP art program in which the piece was created.



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