



# FOOTPRINTS

SEASONAL IMPRESSIONS OF CLARK COUNTY WETLANDS PARK

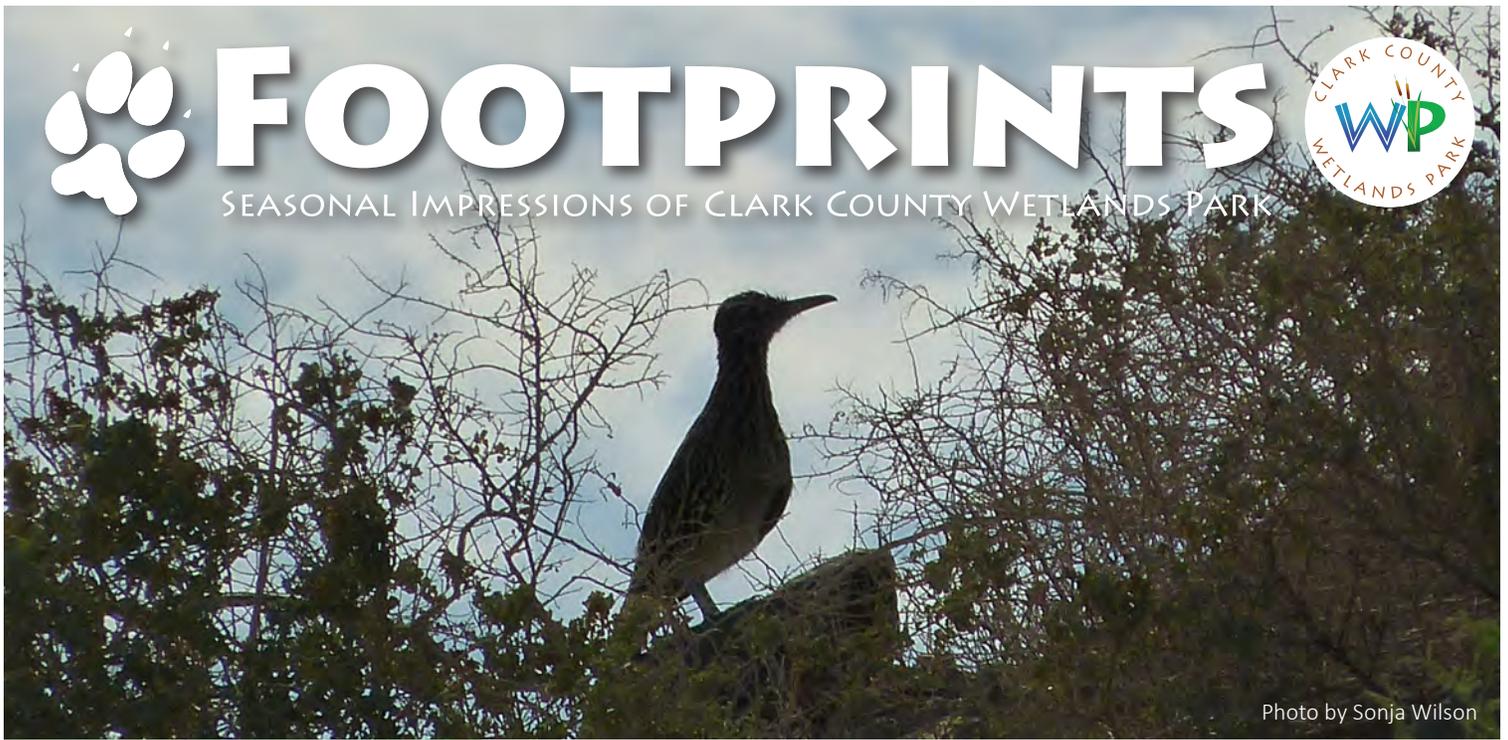


Photo by Sonja Wilson

## WINTER 2017-18

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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, Jan Steinbaugh, Jody Walker, and Clarice Wheeler.

### CALL FOR PHOTOS!

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

**Subject:** "Reflections"

Submit your photo(s) to:

**wetlands@clarkcountynv.gov** by 5pm on February 15, 2018 to be considered. Include your name, date and location of the photo.

**702-455-7522**

**www.ccwetlandspark.com**

**wetlands@clarkcountynv.gov**

## CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF BIRD STUDIES PARK SHOWS CONTINUED INCREASES IN BIRD POPULATIONS

Wetlands Park is proving to be a rich and diverse habitat for birds, thanks to the ongoing work being conducted by the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee ([www.lvwash.org](http://www.lvwash.org)) and its partners. Construction of 21 weirs on the Las Vegas Wash and revegetation of native plants in and along the water's banks provides for the needs of many bird species.

According to Debbie Van Dooremolen, an Environmental Biologist for the Las Vegas Wash Project Coordination Team (Wash Team), "For 20 years we have coordinated and implemented surveys to monitor the status and trends of birds in the Park. Since then, we have seen an increase in bird counts and the number of different species we find, which is great news."

While it's worthy to note the presence of birds migrating or flying through our area, it's also important to note the evidence of males attempting to establish territory and breed here. Such activity indicates that our high-quality habitat is desirable for the birds to mate, and is a sought-after destination for breeding populations.

The first survey, implemented in 1998, monitored the status of the southwestern willow flycatcher, a federally endangered species. "We have observed willow flycatchers migrating through the area nearly every year, and there have been two instances where males stayed in the Park for several weeks 'vocalizing' (singing songs) to encourage female birds passing through to stay and nest with them. Both are encouraging signs," added Van Dooremolen.

In addition to monitoring for the willow flycatcher each year, Wash Team biologists survey for the endangered Yuma Ridgway's rail and the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo. 2017 was an exciting year for both, with individuals from each species establishing breeding territories in the Park.

The Wash Team also oversees surveys of the general bird population conducted every two weeks year-round. "The data doesn't let us down," noted Van Dooremolen. "For instance, in 2005 we observed [about 125] birds per 100 acres. In 2016, we saw [about 259] birds in that same area. Again, this validates that our work on the weirs and vegetation are paying off." 

# SEASONAL FLORA & FAUNA FORECAST

**W**inter 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 visitors may encounter in the Park this time of year:

**FLORA:** Look for plants to 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** that are eaten by the phainopepla.

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

**Look to the water** for American coots, common gallinules, mallard, ring-necked 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. 🌿

## MISTLETOE BERRIES



Photo by Jody Walker

## WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW



Photo by Sheila Glennie

## MALLARD



Photo by Sheila Glennie

## NATURE CLOSE-UP: OSPREY

**E**ndangered by the effects of pesticides in mid-20th century; ospreys have made an incredible recovery following the ban on DDT in 1972. Today, these large, long-legged hawks can be found on every continent except Antarctica and are relatively common sights soaring over shorelines, patrolling waterways, and standing on their huge nests, white heads shining.

Osprey nests are built of dead sticks and lined with bark, grasses, vines, algae, and trash. Nests, especially in a pair's first season, can be relatively small—less than 2.5 feet in diameter and 3–6 inches deep. After generations of adding to the nest, ospreys can end up with nests perhaps 10–13 feet deep and 3–6 feet in diameter – big enough for a human to sit in.

Ospreys hunt fish by diving to the water's surface from some 30 to 100 feet up. They have gripping pads and curved claws on their feet to help them

pluck fish from the water. Ospreys are outstanding hunters. Over several studies, they caught fish in at least one of every four dives. The average time spent hunting before making a catch was about 12 minutes—something to think about next time you try your luck fishing.

Unfortunately, the osprey's habit of using debris of all sorts to build its nest means more plastic in osprey nests. Nests have been found containing all kinds of plastic, including single-use bags, balloons and fishing lines that could easily choke or entangle an adult or young bird.

While plastic pollution is an enormous issue, everyone can make wildlife-friendly choices in their lives, such as using reusable shopping bags, recycling trash, never releasing balloons, and cleaning up plastic litter. If everyone does a little, it can make a big difference for the environment and for wildlife. 🌿

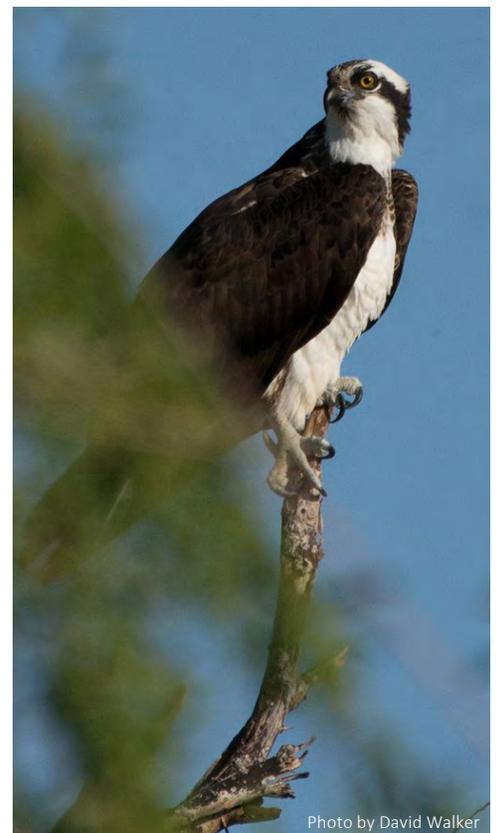


Photo by David Walker

*An osprey perched on a branch*

# THE WONDER OF ENVIRONMENTAL ART

What makes a person an environmentalist? Or an artist? Is it just an interest in nature, a level of artistic skill, a desire to explore, or a fascination with learning? Perhaps it all begins with wonder.

At the Wetlands Park, every program provides at least a bit of environmental education for participants. But art is more than just technique and trying something new. Each of the Studio WP art programs are designed to build a connection between art and science. Art can serve a purpose beyond being an object of beauty. Art has the ability to interact with and educate people about nature and the environment. Art can be appreciated both as the viewer and also through the artistic exploration of the artist.

People feel an instinctual need to take care of the things they feel connected to. Art can help renew or spark anew the connection with nature. The first step to creating art based on nature is to spend time in nature. Go outside. Be a part of the surroundings. Be still. Feel the wind. Observe the veins in a leaf. Listen to the birds sing. Watch the clouds dance with the mountains.

Everyone is unique, and how each person represents what is seen or how it is felt, through art, is unique too. Wetlands Park is a wonderful natural place for inspiration.

Wetlands Park provides a variety of art programs for kids and adults.

For a list of programs, go to [programs.ccwetlandspark.com](http://programs.ccwetlandspark.com). 🌻



Watercolor titled "Thistle" by Jody Walker

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Volunteer Betty Monson with students

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

### What is your background?

My husband and I moved to Las Vegas in August 1979 from northeastern Ohio. We both wanted to get out of the snow! Both of my children were born in Las Vegas. I worked for Nevada State Bank when we first moved to Las Vegas.

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

I was introduced to the Wetlands Park by two wonderful ladies that I knew in Girl Scouts here in Las Vegas. One was in charge of volunteers and the other taught me to love the outdoors. While I recently retired from volunteering for Girl Scouts after 26 years, I continue to volunteer at the Park and have been doing so for 14 years.

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

I started in 2003 by facilitating school children groups and scouts (both girls and boys), on tours in the Park. I also lead adult groups on tours. I continue to do these activities today.

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

When I walk groups through the Park, I try to get everyone of all ages excited and comfortable about being outdoors. I know that if they come to love the

outdoors they will want to protect it.

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

I love the Wetlands Park and I love working with people, especially children. This is the best of both worlds for me. There are so many ways to volunteer here. Once the new person finds a fit, it will become his or her favorite place to be. My day is better the moment I come through the Park gates. There is peace here.

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

Anywhere I can sit alone. 🌿



Students participating in a food web activity

# 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 83 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 2017 the Walkers are recognizing

the osprey and have a collective goal of trekking 5,000 miles. To date, the walkers have traveled **6,824 miles**, exceeding their goal!

With a new year approaching, Wetlands Walkers will be recognizing the **black-necked stilt in 2018** and the goal will be 5,000 miles. The black-necked stilt is a striking black-and-white bird with very long, thin reddish/pink legs and a needle-like black bill.

Start the new year off right by signing

**BLACK-NECKED STILTS HAVE THE SECOND-LONGEST LEGS IN PROPORTION TO THEIR BODIES OF ANY BIRD, EXCEEDED ONLY BY FLAMINGOS.**

up for the Wetlands Walkers 2018 Kick-Off Hike on January 13 at 1:00pm at the Nature Center.

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

## HELP KEEP WILDLIFE WILD AND HEALTHY

Feeding wildlife, especially waterfowl, can cause harm to the individual animals and animal populations. People can help keep wildlife healthy by understanding the effects that artificial feeding has on both the animals and humans.

First, human food is not made for wildlife. Animals have specialized diets in the wild, so offering them artificial food can cause serious health problems. For example, waterfowl, such as ducks, geese, and swans, often suffer from a wing deformity known as "angel wing" that is caused by a nutrient-poor diet.

When wildlife becomes dependent on humans as a food source, it impacts their survival instincts, altering their migration patterns. It also causes overcrowding and competition leading to fighting and injury, and increasing the spread of disease that can be transmitted to pets and humans.

Feeding wildlife causes the animals to become comfortable in residential and recreational areas. When animals lose their fear of humans, they become a nuisance and a safety risk in parks and neighborhoods.

In Clark County, it is against the law

**WHEN ANIMALS LOSE THEIR FEAR OF HUMANS, THEY BECOME... A SAFETY RISK**

to feed animals in County parks. It is also against the law to take or release any animals from the wild (Section 14, Title 18, Chapter 18.30). To help keep wildlife healthy and stop the availability of unintended food supplies in residential neighborhoods, feed pets inside. When visiting parks and other recreation areas, clean up after yourself and follow the rules regarding wildlife. 🌿



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