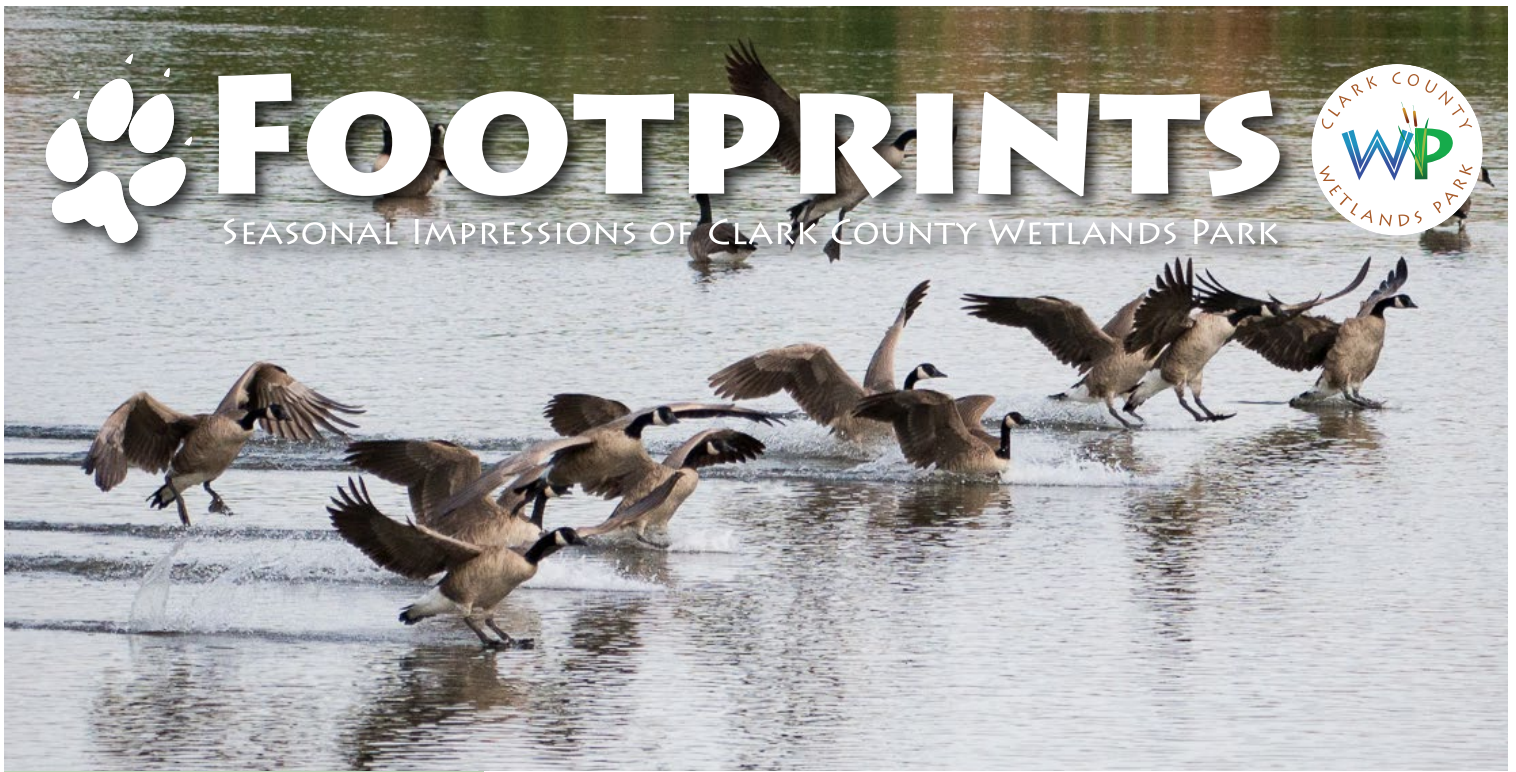




FOOTPRINTS

SEASONAL IMPRESSIONS OF CLARK COUNTY WETLANDS PARK



WINTER 2019-20

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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**.

Staff contributors include, Michelle Baker, Liz Bickmore, Kate Bloomfield, Sheila Glennie, and Jan Steinbaugh.

Cover photo by David Walker.

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OFF-SEASON, STILL ON THE JOB!

This winter season, Wetlands Park is teaming up with firefighters from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Nevada Division of Forestry (NDF) to reduce the nonnative plant species tamarisk in the park. Tamarisk, also known as salt cedar, is a nonnative plant on the State of Nevada Noxious Weed List and a fire hazard. Tamarisk thickets can ignite quickly, burn hotter than native species and can lead to a more severe burn. Working together in the off season, the fire management programs from NDF and BLM are reducing the fuel load in the park, creating fire breaks and ultimately helping to reduce the number of fires they fight in the park during the summer fire season.

As part of a fuel reduction program, NDF crews in the Nature Preserve are selectively hand-cutting tamarisk with chainsaws and chipping the trees into mulch. This helps protect the soil from drying out and reduces weed growth. BLM crews are tackling a dense grove of tamarisk in the Duck Creek area with a masticator. The rotary blade shreds trees in place, clearing the way

for native plants. The National Park Service Exotic Plant Management Team follows up with herbicide to prevent any resprouts from growing.

Wetlands Park is also working with Clark County Public Works and Southern Nevada Water Authority to remove other dense stands of tamarisk in the park. This is part of a management effort to address noxious weeds and improve wildlife habitat. By creating these partnerships, Wetlands Park is able to reduce costs and collaborate with technical teams that benefit the County and our resources. 🌱



Photo by Liz Bickmore

BLM crews removing Tamarisk at Duck Creek using a masticator.

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 phainopepla, verdin, white-crowned sparrow, northern harrier, and yellow-rumped warbler. 🌿

COMMON GALLINULE



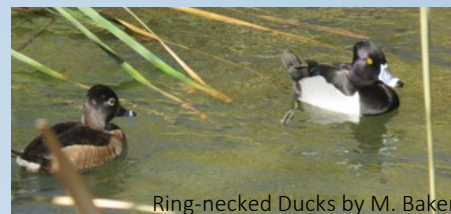
Photo by S. Glennie

PHENOLOGY PHUN

Phenology Phun is an hour long, once a week, citizen-science bird count at the Big Weir Bridge. The focus group is made up of 24 specific birds. By gathering data for the past 3 years, we have a good idea what birds will be seen in the each season.

Top 5 Winter Spottings

American Coot
Ring-necked Duck
Mallard
Pied-billed Grebe
Northern Harrier



Ring-necked Ducks by M. Baker

NATURE CLOSE-UP: DESERT MISTLETOE

Desert Mistletoe: friend or foe? When you hear the word, mistletoe, you might imagine sharing a kiss beneath a hanging broadleaf plant at a holiday party. Desert mistletoe, a common perennial in the American Southwest, is a very different plant. A parasitic plant, often found on Mesquite trees and protected by forbidding thorns, is not exactly welcoming to those seeking a holiday kiss..



Photo by M. Baker

Desert mistletoe in a mesquite tree.

An important food source, desert mistletoe berries and flowers attract



Photo by S. Glennie

Desert mistletoe berries.

native birds, insects, and mammals. While many species of birds and mammals feed on mistletoe berries, the Phainopepla bird has a special relationship with the plant. The shiny, black, crested Phainopepla perched atop a mistletoe-laden tree is a familiar sight to local bird watchers. Phainopeplas have digestive tracts specialized for eating mistletoe fruit and the birds may eat up to 1,100 berries a day! Each berry spends only about 12 minutes in a Phainopepla's intestine before the seed is passed onto

another plant host. So while mistletoe berries provide food and water for the birds, the birds provide important seed distribution for the mistletoe.

Desert mistletoe is actually hemiparasitic, meaning they are half parasites. After taking water and nutrients from their host; the plant photosynthesizes and creates its own sugars.

Death to a host tree caused solely by mistletoe is very uncommon. It usually happens if the host is weakened by a lack of water or is overtaken by multiple clusters of mistletoe. Desert mistletoe can live with a host tree for many years. Additionally, desert mistletoe may even benefit their host by attracting insect eating birds to help keep the trees free of pests.

So, while desert mistletoe does use water and nutrients from its hosts, the plant plays a vital role in the desert ecosystem. So is this parasite a friend or foe? You decide. 🌿

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

Include your name, date and the Studio WP art program in which the piece was created.



Watercolor by
Cladia Drake

**JOIN US FOR OUR
NEXT WINTER EVENT**

WETLANDS

EXPLORER DAY

Monday

February 17, 2020

**JOIN US FOR OUR
NEXT SPRING EVENT**
WORLD MIGRATORY

BIRD DAY

Saturday

March 21, 2020

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Volunteer Annette White discussing plants with Clark County School District students during a guided tour.

Passionate volunteers are priceless. They are the heart and voice of Wetlands Park. Annette White 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?

Originally, I'm from Albuquerque, New Mexico. I went to college in El Paso, Texas, where I stayed to teach for over 22 years before moving to Nevada in 1990. I taught third, second, and first grades, in that order before I retired from the Clark County School District.

How long have you been volunteering at Wetlands Park?

Nineteen years. I started when we were at the Soccer Park and was one of the first volunteers leading field trips out of the trailer, long before the Nature Center was built.

What changes have you seen in the Park throughout your years of volunteering?

As a long time volunteer, I have seen many changes to the Park. When we were located at the Soccer Park, we would help visitors find the Park by giving out directions to the Park. One of the improvements to the Park that excited me the most was the restroom. I still remember how exciting it was to finally have a real restroom for the students and myself. Of course, the trail improvements, the new building with the Exhibit Hall, and now the Nature Store make me proud to be a part of the Wetlands Park family.

How did you come to volunteer at the Park?

After retiring I wanted something to do and discovered that I missed the students. A teacher friend invited me to try volunteering at the Park. I shadowed a fellow volunteer and thought, "Oh, I can

do this!" The newly developing field trip program turned out to be a perfect fit and I have been volunteering ever since.

In what capacities have you been volunteering at the Park?

As an Education Facilitator, I enjoy leading field trips for the Clark County school children. However, over the years, I have served in all kinds of ways. I've participated in events like Haunt the Wetlands, Explorer Days, and the Summer Discovery Day. I've also made some of the original resources for the Park's interpretation programs, including the school field trip program.

Why do you like volunteering at the Park?

Lots of reasons! I like the volunteers and sharing nature with the students. I feel like I am among friends and have known them for many years.

The opportunity to continue learning through the trainings is another great reason.

What is your favorite spot in the Park?

My favorite place is the Cottonwood Grove. I love it when the leaves turn yellow and you can hear the sound of the stream. It reminds me of home. I grew up around cottonwood trees. 🌿

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 **109** 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 2019 the Walkers are recognizing the northern

flicker and have a collective goal of trekking 5,000 miles. To date, the walkers have traveled **5,558 miles**, exceeding their goal!

With a new year approaching, Wetlands Walkers will be recognizing the **Painted Lady** in 2020 and the goal will be 3,500 miles. The painted lady is a familiar, orange and black butterfly often spotted at Wetlands Park in the summer.



AT FIRST GLANCE, THE PAINTED LADY MAY APPEAR TO BE A MONARCH BUT IT IS SMALLER THAN ITS MORE FAMOUS MIGRATION COUSIN

Start the new year off right by signing up for the **Wetlands Walkers 2020 Kick-off Discovery Walk** on **January 5** at **1:00 pm** at the Nature Center.

To learn more about the Wetlands Walkers program and the northern flicker/painted lady, stop by the Exhibit Hall in the Nature Center. 🌱

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A BEAVER!

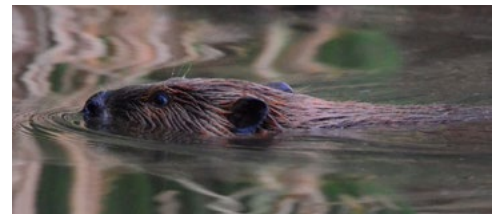
Sleep, eat, build, and repeat! Not much going on during the day for a beaver, but just wait and see what happens when the sun goes down! Once it does, these mammals spend most of their time eating and building. A young beaver looking for love, or a monogamous couple looking for a little privacy, will start building a dam to form a new pond. On the bank of the pond, just barely above water level, they will build a den, also called a lodge. They use their powerful front teeth to cut trees and other plants that they use for

building. That is why you see wire mesh installed around some of our trees in the Park. Beavers will also create a backdoor from their dens to escape if threatened. You may find holes in the Park that are full of water that lead back to beaver dens, so watch your step.

Not only do beavers use trees to build dams but they also eat them. As vegetarians, they eat the leaves, bark, and roots, as well as other aquatic vegetation. They love our Freemont cottonwood trees! It is difficult to acquire all the nutrients they need to

form their diet so beavers, like other rodents, will eat their own excrement. This way the extra nutrients do not go to waste.

After eating and building dams all night, it is time for a long nap throughout the day, then repeat! It's Just a typical day in the life of a beaver. 🌱



Beaver photo by Philip Martini.

CALL FOR WETLANDS PARK PHOTOS!

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

Photo Subject: "Impressions"

Submit your high resolution photo(s) to: wetlands@clarkcountynv.gov

by 5pm on Feb. 15, 2020 to be considered. Include your name, date, and location of the photo.



"Black & White" photo entry submitted by Christopher Fields.



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