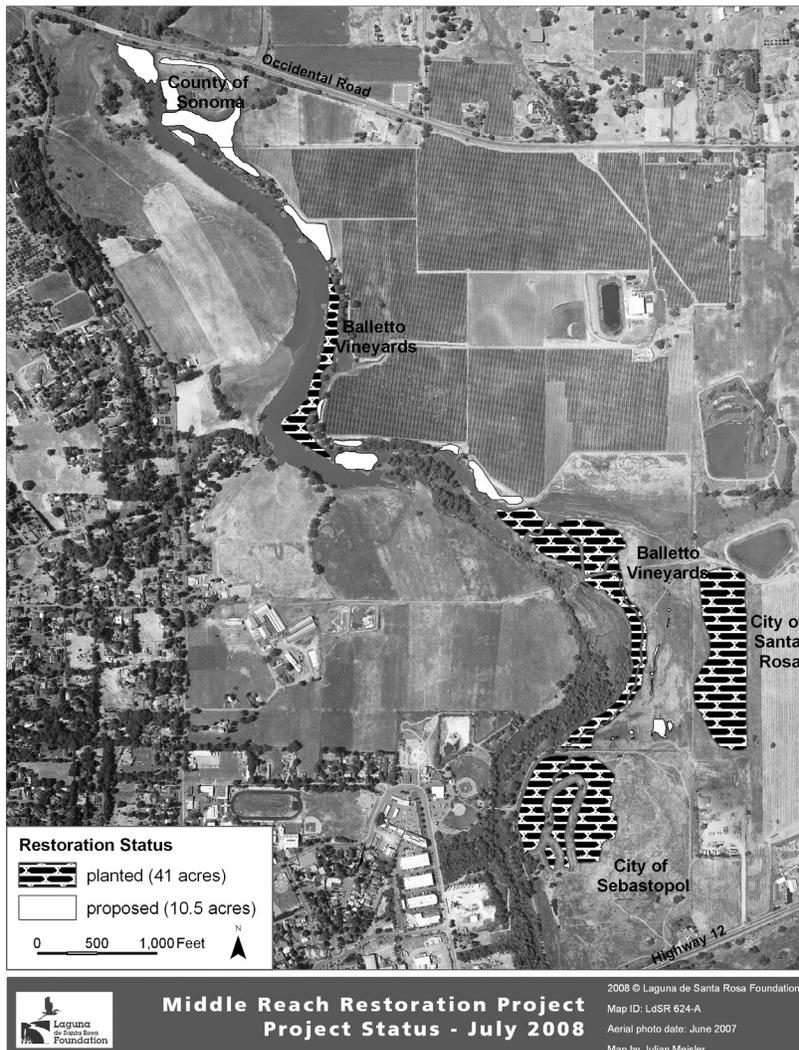


## Middle Reach Restoration Project Update: Meadowlark Makeover

*Catherine Cumberland, Restoration Program Assistant*

The Foundation's Middle Reach Restoration Project expanded again this spring with a planting at Sebastopol's Meadowlark Field. The project extends over an 11-acre area just across from the floating bridge on the Field's west side. You may be familiar with the site through participation in the LagunaKeeper program in the 1990s (originally a program of the Sebastopol Parks Department). Previously known as Barlow Field, Meadowlark has a complex history of human uses and has already been the site of several restoration efforts.

At present, the Field contains many mature oaks, but natural regeneration is poor. Sandy soils and a deep layer of annual grass thatch inhibit seedling establishment. Along the banks of the Laguna conditions are better, with mostly native vegetation – masses of snowberry and roses, healthy stands of sedge and soaproot, poison oak and pipevine – amid a closed canopy of willows, oaks and Oregon ash. Foundation staff continue to work with Sebastopol Parks personnel to contain the encroachment of perennial pepperweed in the riparian zone, and in April we established our new planting in the outer "oak savanna" zone.



With tremendous help from the California Conservation Corps, we planted a dozen or so native species; around 1500 plants. The Corps then assembled the drip irrigation system, which uses reclaimed water provided by the City of Santa Rosa. City staffers were very generous with technical assistance, and also loaned us 800 feet of 8" reusable PVC pipe for water delivery. Finally, LagunaKeeper volunteers participated on several work dates to make this, as our other restoration projects, a genuine community effort.

This is our first planting on land accessible to the public, and we encourage you to visit if you haven't seen it yet. Enter next to the Chevron station at 5640 Highway 12, or by crossing the Laguna on the floating bridge behind the Sebastopol Community Center on Morris St. Take

the "Bluebird" trail, which winds around and between the planting areas. Check in if you see us working out there – we'd be glad to show you around.

See the LagunaKeepers events calendar on Page 6 for ways to volunteer this fall with the Middle Reach Restoration Project.

# Executive Director's Report

Dan Schurman



The Laguna Foundation has experienced profound growth during the past 6 years. From an organization with no staff and no budget, we are now a thriving, professional organization that boasts a flourishing docent-led environmental education program, a restoration program tackling the biggest invasive plant threats and undertaking the largest riparian restoration project in the watershed's history, and a burgeoning research and science program to better monitor the health of the Laguna and the effectiveness of restoration and management efforts. And we're well on our way to having our own home in the Laguna, a physical space to house our activities and introduce the public to the wonders of the Laguna.

As our growth curve has been steep, so too has our challenge of maintaining this larger organization. Relying on project grants to spur our growth and develop our capacity has been a successful strategy, but it is not sustainable as a sole source given the unpredictable nature of grant funding. Accordingly, we have simultaneously worked to develop a stable individual donor funding base to counter the inevitable peaks and valleys of grant and project funding. Thanks to all of you, we now count 2,000 local households as regular contributors to the Foundation!

However, we're not quite yet where we want to be, which is to be on solid enough financial footing that as we experience the inevitable lulls in project funding, we have enough accumulated reserve or reliable unrestricted donations to carry us through the lean times without needing to make significant cuts in expenditures. This season's overall economic uncertainty, combined with such a lull in our project funding, has put us in a position where we had to make some difficult decisions about how to make necessary cuts while not interrupting the momentum of our programs and projects.

Accordingly, we are sorry to announce that Joe Honton and Wayne Mitchell have left the Foundation in July. I trust that you will join me and the rest of the Laguna Foundation staff and Board members in thanking Joe and Wayne for their contributions to the Foundation's success and in wishing them all the best and in supporting them as they transition into the next phase of their respective professional lives. We will miss them and, knowing what quality people they are, trust that they will continue to find success wherever they go.

Thanks for all your support and especially so as we proceed through this transition. The Foundation will continue to work energetically to protect, restore, study, interpret and celebrate the Laguna to benefit our community and future generations.

## Donations Honor Marilyn Strom's Memory

Marilyn Strom, a long-time Sonoma County resident and teacher, recently passed away at age 81.

She was an Analy High School graduate, and earned a bachelor's and master's degree in education from Sonoma State University. She taught in the Cotati-Rohnert Park School District for 34 years. She was the former president of the Cotati-Rohnert Park Educators Association and was active in the California Teachers Association. Marilyn Strom was also an avid weekend bird watcher.

She is survived by her daughter, Virginia Strom-Martin, a former California assemblywoman and Laguna Foundation board member; her son, Eric Strom of Sebastopol; brother Donald Buck of Klamath Falls, OR; and five grandchildren.

Some of her friends and family have chosen to honor her memory by making a donation to the Laguna Learning Center. These memorial donors include:

Dennis Anderson  
Doris and J.L. Bostrom  
Dorothy Brenner  
Rosanne and Donald Buck  
Chris Engel and Hugh Helm

Loretta Garcia on behalf of the Cotati-  
Rohnert Park Educators Association  
Tom and Carol Isaak  
Jan Munn & Margaret Kelley  
Mary Evelyn Panttaja

Charles and Marlene Perry  
Thomas and Jamie Ring  
Walter Strom  
Virginia Strom-Martin  
Dona Wiggins

---

What a wonderful way to  
honor the life of a person who  
loved teaching and learning.

---

## Education Endeavors

*Christine Fontaine, Director of Education Programs*

After participating in ten weeks of dynamic classes, plus field trips that put the reading and learning in context and fostered personal relationships with the Laguna, nine trainees graduated from the training program and joined the Laguna Docent Circle on May 30 at a lovely evening celebration on the Laguna. We are pleased to welcome each of them and excited about the unique talents and skills each person brings to our education programs.

Just like the vernal cycle of the Laguna, spring was a very active time for the docents! In addition to helping during the new docent training plus engaging and teaching 365 students over 17 classroom visits and 17 field trips to the Laguna over an 8-week time frame for Learning Laguna, the docents also reached out to people interested in the Laguna through many community events, including:

- We piloted a new education program called "Watershed Buddies" in partnership with the City of Santa Rosa and Willowside and Oak Grove schools.
- Delta Pond walks—our annual event in honor of the International Migratory Bird Day. About 85 people attended the docent-led walks to the Great Blue Heron, Double-Crested Cormorant and Great Egret rookery. Two groups even had sightings of a Bald Eagle! Including sales of Laguna tee-shirts, gift cards and Snapys, (the amazing insect observation/relocation tool) we raised just over \$900 which goes directly to provide buses for Learning Laguna field trips to schools who would not otherwise be able to participate in the program.

## Field Notes for Summer in the Laguna

*Christine Fontaine, Director of Education Programs*

As summer temperatures rise and water levels draw down, activity in the Laguna slows. The showy and ephemeral vernal pool blossoms are past; nesting duties are over as are most of the rigors of raising young; fall bird migration hasn't yet begun, so this is a great time to focus on some of the stalwarts of the Laguna ecosystems—the trees and shrubs that provide cover, protection, food, and bank stabilization. Next time you are enjoying the Laguna see if you can identify these important plants:

**Box Elder (*Acer negundo*)** is a small, usually fast-growing tree that lives about 60 years. They grow from 30-75 feet tall and often have several trunks and can form impenetrable thickets. Like other members of the maple family, box elders produce sap high in sugar content that can be used to produce syrup. Look for the pinnately-compound leaves with three to five leaflets and serrated edges, often growing with willows.

**California Rose (*Rosa californica*)** This deciduous shrub is native to moist places throughout the state and grows 3-6 feet in height. They often form thickets that provide good shelter and nesting sites.

- Docents led walks and tabled events at the Whole Foods Earth Day Celebration, the Apple Blossom Parade, the Sebastopol Walks! program, a kid's yoga camp, and even a Girl Scouts event!

## Docent Class of 2008 with Trainers



Bottom row (left to right): Maggie Hart, Paula Reid, Lisa Hug and trainer Christine Fontaine. Top row: Trainer Raini Vallarino, Laura Neumann, Connie Ayers, Ryan Harper, Larry Shapiro, Raymond Rapp and trainer CJ Johnson. Not pictured: Heidi Stewart and trainer Denise Cadman.

Fruit of the Wild Rose, known as the hip, is said to contain more vitamin C, calcium, phosphorus, and iron than oranges and serve as important forage for wildlife. The shrub is an important understory species and also attracts beneficial insects. The leaf is compound with 5-7 leaflets that are ovate to oblong, toothed and about 1½" long. Other members of the rose family include apricots, plums, pears, apples, strawberries, and raspberries.

**Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*)** The regal valley oaks are deciduous trees that can reach heights of 100 feet and live from 400-600 years. In most years a single tree can produce up to a ton of acorns that are food for myriad species, including jays, woodpeckers, squirrels, deer, wild turkeys and mice. Even black bears eat acorns. Many birds nest in valley oaks, including Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, Great Horned Owl, Anna's Hummingbird, Western Kingbird, Western Screech Owl, Western Bluebird, and many more. Even the fallen leaves provide habitat for salamanders, snakes and lizards. The species is endemic to California. Look for the felt-like deeply lobed leaves.

# Come Enjoy the Foundation's 5th Annual Art & Garden Gala

Mark Green, Associate Executive Director

Celebrate the Laguna with a taste of the good life on Sunday, September 14, from 3 - 6 PM. Now in its fifth year, the Laguna Foundation's annual garden party fundraiser will be our best ever! As always, the Gala is generously hosted by the Vine Hill House, at 3601 Vine Hill Road, north of Sebastopol.

The Gala is a luxurious summer afternoon of tasty pleasures and fascinating entertainment in an elegant outdoor setting overlooking the Laguna.

With abundant and delicious food by Trends Catering paired with premium local wines, magical strolling entertainment and a magnificent silent auction of original works by local artists and rare wine selections, the Art and Garden Gala is unlike any other event. Many of Sonoma County's most prominent local artists are on hand to discuss the works they have contributed to the auction.

Especially exciting will be a live auction by celebrity auctioneer David Katz of adventurous "experience packages", including kayaking and birding adventures, a Laguna flyover, and a vacation getaway at Sea Ranch.

All proceeds benefit the Foundation's work to preserve, restore, and create opportunities for learning and enjoyment in the Laguna. Doing good has never felt this decadent.

Tickets are \$75 and can be purchased on the Foundation's website. The Gala sells out every year, so reserve your tickets now!

## There is Still Time to Sponsor the Gala!

Promote your business or show your support! Sponsors are listed in the event program, recognized onsite during the event, and all Sponsors receive tickets. This is the Foundation's major fundraising event of the year—please do your part for the Laguna!

- Bald Eagle \$10,000 (businesses or individuals; includes 20 tickets)
- Golden Eagle \$5,000 (businesses or individuals; includes 15 tickets)
- Otter \$2,500 (businesses or individuals; includes 12 tickets)
- Bobcat \$1,000 (businesses or individuals; includes 6 tickets)
- Heron \$500 (businesses or individuals; includes 4 tickets)
- Egret \$250 (individuals only, please; includes 2 tickets)

Sponsorship packet is online or for more information, contact Mark Green at 527-9277 x103 or email: [mark@lagunafoundation.org](mailto:mark@lagunafoundation.org)



These stilted marionettes of the "Bird Tribe" are just two of the many performers from the Mystic Family Circus.

### Thank You Major Gala Sponsors

Bill and Gail Bettinelli

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# Laguna Learning Adventures and Community Walks Calendar

## Summer Walks at the Sebastopol Wetlands Preserve with Laguna Docents

Wednesday, August 6 • 7:00 – 8:30 PM

Saturday, August 16 • 9:30 – 11:30 AM

\$10 per person

During these short and pleasant walks (under 1 mile) Laguna docents will provide an overview of the plants and animals of the Laguna and we will also touch on some of the cultural history of the area. You are welcome to pre-register or just join us at the site. Pre-registration is not required. Meet in Sebastopol at the parking lot BEHIND the Youth Annex at 425 Morris Street. Arrive 15 minutes early for prompt check-in.

## Exploring Kelly Wetlands Family Walk with Laguna Docents

Saturday, August 9 • 9:30 – 11:30 AM

\$5 per person

This demonstration wetland overlooks the Laguna and has many special features of its own including open water, emergent wetland, riparian, and upland vegetation wildlife habitats. Thousands of school children have explored this area through our Learning Laguna program. This is your family's chance to experience the magic of the place! We'll investigate and learn about the plants and the animal signs we are likely to encounter, play environmental education games and weave a toy from tules. Join us for a fun (and educational!) morning.

## Food Webs & Interconnections with Denise Cadman

Saturday, August 23 • 9 AM – 12:00 PM

\$25 per person

How are the plants and animals of the Laguna connected? What makes Valley Oak trees so important? Why do migrating birds "stop over?" Join us on an exploration of the City of Santa Rosa's Alpha Farm Wildlife Area and we will learn about some of the vital plant and animal interconnections of the Laguna.

## Western Pond Turtle Research Update

Nicole Karres, Biology Graduate Student, Sonoma State University

Our current Western Pond Turtle research is a collaboration between the Laguna Foundation and the Laboratory of Dr. Geist at Sonoma State University. As part of a pilot head-starting project we recently collected 56 freshly laid turtle eggs that are now being hatched at the Sonoma State University laboratory. Once born, the turtles will go to the Oakland Zoo, where they will be raised as part of a local conservation exhibit. Later, the young turtles will return to their original collection site to augment the declining population. My planned graduate research will specifically focus on the remaining but threatened Laguna Western Pond Turtle populations. The Western Pond Turtle is a listed Species of Concern and our goal is to examine turtle diet, distribution, population dynamics, and reproductive success of our only native turtle in the Western U.S.

## Peaks to Basin

Journeying Along Mark West Creek to the Laguna with  
Steve Barnhart and Greg Damron of Pepperwood Preserve  
and Christine Fontaine of the Laguna Foundation

Saturday, October 18 • 9 AM – 5 PM

The Laguna encompasses a 254 square-mile watershed and Mark West Creek is one of the gems of this dynamic system of waterways & wetlands, riparian corridors and oak woodlands. Join us to explore the zones of the creek, from its upper reaches possessing diverse vegetation types to the unique habitats and floodplain functions of the Laguna. Travel will be in vans with several stops along the way to discuss plant life, wildlife corridors and the intersecting pathways of water and human activities. Detailed information regarding where to meet and what to bring will be sent upon registration.

NOTE: Registration for this class is being processed by the Community Education department at Sant Rosa Junior College. Please visit <https://busapp02.santarosa.edu/CommunityEducation/> to register or call their office at 527-4371.

## Wonderous Waterfowl

with Lisa Hug

Saturday, November 8 • 9 AM – 1 PM

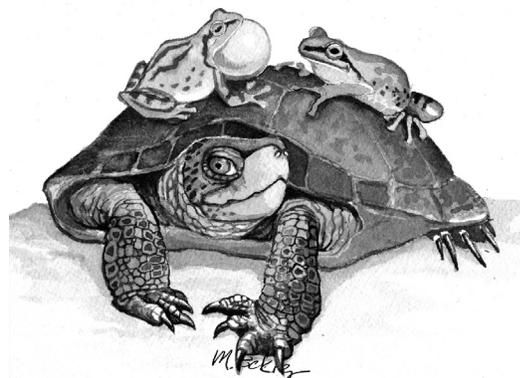
\$25 per person

Come spend a pleasant morning sharpening your skills or learning how to identify ducks, grebes, and any other water birds we happen to find during this fun-filled workshop. We will spend the first hour in the classroom with a waterfowl PowerPoint program that will whet your appetite for observing the real birds in the field. Then we will explore the water treatment ponds to locate the myriad duck species spending the winter in the rich, California coastal wetland areas.

*Registration is available online:*

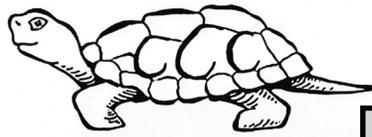
[www.lagunadesantarosa.org/laguna\\_walks\\_classes.shtml](http://www.lagunadesantarosa.org/laguna_walks_classes.shtml)

*For more information, please contact Christine Fontaine at 527-9277 x102 or email: [christine@lagunafoundation.org](mailto:christine@lagunafoundation.org)*



# Cotati Creek Critter Events

INSIDE/OUTSIDE NATURE EDUCATION SERIES



**Saturday, August 2, 9 AM – 1 PM**

## **Plant Communities of Sonoma County: The Pepperwood Preserve**

Pepperwood Preserve protects a 3117-acre zone of stunning landscape and rich biodiversity near the divide of the watersheds of the Napa and Russian rivers. Join us to experience one of the more pristine areas of Sonoma County. We'll be at Pepperwood by 10 am. Carpool from Cotati at 9 am.

**Monday, September 8, 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM**

## **Getting to Know the Laguna de Santa Rosa with Denise Cadman**

A hike in a 90-acre natural area on Alpha Farm, in the City of Santa Rosa, with Denise Cadman, Natural Resource Specialist for the City of Santa Rosa. Dress for hiking with appropriate footwear, sun protection, water, etc. Meet at the statue of the accordion player in La Plaza Park (Old Redwood Hwy & W.Sierra Ave.) to carpool.

**Sunday, October 5, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM**

## **Fall Bird Walk with John Dell'Osso**

A gentle, easy-going walk along the Laguna de Santa Rosa in Cotati with John Dell'Osso, Chief of Interpretation at Point Reyes National Seashore and long-time resident of Cotati. Meet by the statue of the accordion player in La Plaza Park, (Old Redwood Hwy & W. Sierra Ave).

**Monday, November 3, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**

## **History, Ecology & Restoration of California Grasslands with Caroline Christian**

Grasslands are among the most biologically diverse, yet threatened ecosystems in California. Caroline Christian is an assistant professor in the Department of Environmental Studies and Planning at Sonoma State University, where she teaches courses on conservation biology and restoration ecology. Ray Miller Community Center, E. School St. (behind Cotati City Hall, 201 W. Sierra Ave.)

## **CREEK STEWARDSHIP DAYS**

We will continue to plant native trees, shrubs and an understory of native grasses, sedges and rushes along the Laguna de Santa Rosa. Other tasks include weeding and mulching to maintain existing plants, plant propagation and other tasks in the plant nursery.

Saturdays • 9 AM - Noon (Second Saturday of the month)

**October 11 & November 8: Fall Trash Pick-Up**

Sundays • 10 AM - 1 PM (Last Sunday of the month)

**October 26 & November 30: Restoring Tools & Plant Care**

For all workdays meet at "Ladybug Lot," Cotati City well lot #2 on Lakewood Ave.

For more information about the Inside/Outside Series or Creek Stewardship Days, please visit [www.CotatiCreekCritters.info](http://www.CotatiCreekCritters.info) or contact Jenny Blaker at 792-4422 or email: [jenny@creeks.cotati.info](mailto:jenny@creeks.cotati.info).

## **LagunaKeepers Events**

The LagunaKeepers are at it again! In case you haven't heard of us, the LagunaKeepers are the Foundation's restoration volunteers. Each month, in partnership with the City of Santa Rosa, we meet to give the Laguna a little hands-on love! This can mean fence removal, willow sprigging, weed control, or planting, depending on the site and the time of year.

Keepers meet at locations throughout the Laguna, but workdays are always on a **Saturday from 9am to noon**. Tools, gloves, and snacks are provided, along with plenty of fresh air and camaraderie. Rain does not cancel, unless it's a downpour.

Details are available on our website or in the **2008-2009 LagunaKeeper Events Calendar** (watch your mailbox) but meanwhile, here's a preview of our upcoming workdates:

**September 27 – Meadowlark Field**

**October 25 – Native Plant Garden**

**November 22 – Duer Creek**

**December 13 – Middle Reach**

**January 17 – Willow Sprigging**

**February 14 – Laguna Uplands**

**March 14 – Irwin Creek**

**April 25 – Native Plant Garden**

**May 9 – Cotati Creek Critters**

For information, or to receive a calendar or monthly email or postcard reminders of LagunaKeepers workdates, please contact Catherine Cumberland at 527-9277 x108 or email: [catherine@lagunafoundation.org](mailto:catherine@lagunafoundation.org)

# Thank you to our generous supporters...

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...and, of course, all  
our donors, volunteers, and you.



The **Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation**, founded in 1989, works to preserve, restore, and inspire greater understanding and appreciation of the Laguna de Santa Rosa wetland complex, which is the largest tributary of the Russian River and Sonoma County's richest wildlife area. The Foundation conducts educational programs, implements preservation and restoration projects, conducts scientific research, works with landowners and public agencies to protect and improve Laguna resources, and advocates for appropriately managed opportunities for the public to enjoy the Laguna.

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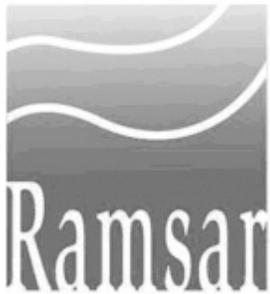
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Christine Fontaine, Director of Education Programs  
Maggie Hart, Administrative Director  
Julian Meisler, Restoration Program Director  
Christina Sloop, PhD, Research Director

## International Recognition for Laguna Wetlands under Ramsar Convention

*Christina Sloop, Research Director*



On World Wetlands Day, February 2, 2008, the U.S. National Ramsar Committee announced a grant to the Laguna Foundation to complete the application process to designate the Laguna and Santa Rosa Plain wetland complexes as wetlands of international significance. Designated wetlands under the 1971 Ramsar Convention are important for the conservation of global biological diversity

and for sustaining human life. One hundred and fifty-eight nations have joined the Ramsar Convention, yet there are to date only 22 sites located in the USA out of a total of 1721 worldwide sites. Four Ramsar sites currently exist in California: Bolinas Lagoon, Tomales Bay, Grassland Ecological Area, and the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Ramsar sites worldwide cover over 14.5 billion acres, an area larger than the combined surface area of France, Germany, Spain, and Switzerland. Ramsar designation comes with significant benefits for the designated area: international and national recognition that will entice worldwide interest in the area for eco-tourism, increased public awareness, heightened conservation commitment locally and regionally, and improved grant funding competition internationally and nationally.

A wetland is of international importance if it fulfills one of nine Ramsar criteria. The Laguna and the Santa Rosa Plain are part of the 'California Floristic Province,' one of the world's biodiversity hotspots, and fulfill four of the nine Ramsar criteria: 1) containing representative, rare or unique wetland types; 2) containing endangered species or threatened ecological communities; 3) supporting populations of plant and/or animal species important for maintaining the biological diversity of a particular biogeographic region; and 4) regularly supporting 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of wetland-dependent non-avian animal species.

To receive this special international designation for the Laguna and Santa Rosa Plain we are working with SSU intern Wendy Jones. Wendy has gathered all pertinent information on the application form and we are now in the process of identifying the specific high priority Laguna areas to work toward their inclusion in this non-regulatory, yet prestigious and important conservation designation. We will collaborate with many of the Laguna's landowners to realize this goal and are positive that we will be able to include a sizeable Laguna wetland complex for designation. We will also work to get the needed regional, state and national political support to hopefully announce the Laguna's designation as the next US Ramsar site on the next Worldwide Wetlands Day, February 2, 2009. We will keep you posted!