



California Waterfowl

# 2021 Annual Report



# WHAT WE DO

## WATERFOWL



- Banding waterfowl for research
- Rescuing imperiled wild duck nests
- Helping give duck nests in California farm fields more time to hatch
- Providing nest boxes for wood ducks
- Engaging volunteers in hands-on work



## WETLANDS

- Restoring and renewing wintering habitat
- Adding breeding habitat
- Managing CWA-owned wetlands
- Grant-writing assistance for duck clubs

## HUNTING



- Private-land hunts for the public
- Hunting on CWA properties
- Veteran hunting & fishing trips

## EDUCATION



- Teaching conservation in public schools
- Leading school field trips to wetlands
- Junior Duck Stamp Program

## ADVOCACY

- Defending hunting and hunters' gun rights
- Calling for optimal hunting regulations
- Fighting for water for managed wetlands
- Sponsoring conservation-friendly bills



# 2020-21

# Program highlights

## 11,078 acres

Wetland, riparian and breeding-habitat work completed in California in 2020; of that, 6,498 acres were public land and over \$6.2 million was utilized.

## 8,377 ducks and geese

Banded by CWA biologists and partners in 2020.

## 28,832 wood ducks

Hatched from nest boxes in the California Wood Duck Program in 2020. We are closing in on 1 million for the program's total!

## 2,863 duck eggs

Rescued from wildlife-friendly farmers' fields in 2021 – then incubated, hatched, reared and released – through the Egg Salvage Program.

## 1,768 acres of wheat and triticale

Enrolled in CWA's Delayed Wheat Harvest Incentive Program in 2021, giving wild duck nests more time to hatch before harvest.

## 8,640 students

Learned about wetlands and the role hunters play in conservation through in-person and virtual programs.

## 350 veterans

Enjoyed CWA hunts in 2020-21.

## 2,424 hunters

Enjoyed private-land hunts in 2020 with CWA's Hunt Program. Over the life of the program, we have served over 16,000 hunters!

## 16 state bills

Supported or opposed by CWA's advocacy team to support conservation, hunting and managed wetlands in 2020.

## \$1.5 million

Raised with our virtual auctions in 2020, which took the place of our normal, in-person fundraising events.

## 7 companies

Proudly supported our work as CWA Corporate Partners in 2020-21: Banded, Benelli, Federal Premium Ammunition, Jack Daniel's, YETI, Sitka and SportDOG® Brand.

# HUNT PROGRAM continues to 'bring it'

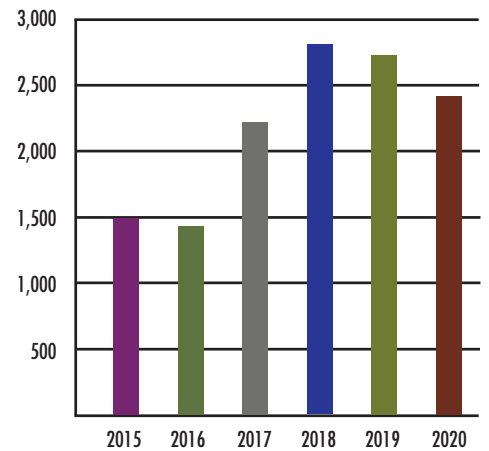
Lack of access to hunting opportunity is the leading cause of hunters leaving the field, after personal reasons such as health and family. California Waterfowl's Hunt Program proactively addresses that problem by providing affordable access to hunting at some of the most exclusive private properties in California.

In 2020-21, the Hunt Program provided 1,000+ individual opportunities, serving 2,424 hunters.

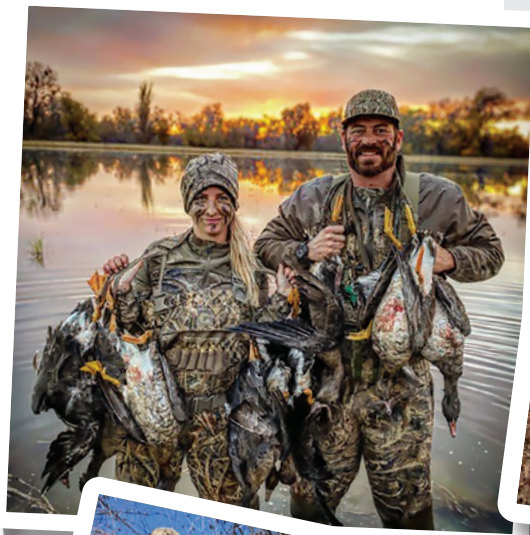
Overall, we had a reduction in opportunities provided compared with 2019 due to the pandemic. However, with creativity, we continued to

host hunts all over the state while adhering to local and state COVID mandates. The pandemic also pumped interest in hunting, not just in our Hunt Program, but state- and nationwide. We experienced record highs in applications, and hunters were truly grateful for the opportunities we were able to provide.

In total, 40 private duck clubs, landowners, guide services and non-profits offered hunts through the Hunt Program last year, but our participation numbers were driven largely by abundant hunting opportunities at CWA properties: Sanborn Slough, Butte Creek Island Ranch, Quimby Island, Goose Lake, Grizzly Ranch and Denverton.



*"As a first-time hunter, I had a great time. Reached my limit and couldn't be happier."*  
 – 2020-21 Hunt Program participant



# AT THE CAPITOL WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES

In 2020, the California Legislature did almost nothing that wasn't pandemic- or budget-related. As a result, almost no legislation that California Waterfowl supported or opposed made it to the finish line. But 2021 has been a different story, and a good one at that.

Two key efforts succeeded this year.

**First, DFW funding.** Nearly \$251 million of new money went into the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's budget this year, including \$819,000 for water pumping and other wetland management at state wildlife areas that was a direct result of CWA's discussions with the Department of Finance. Most of the money is intended to help DFW better meet its mission after a study showed it was substantially underfunded. The new funding includes money to increase access to department lands and provide a mobile application to display hunting and fishing licenses.

**Second, legislative success.** The Legislature passed AB 614, CWA's bill to fund the state Nesting Bird Habitat Incentive Program. CWA proposed this bill in 2020 after a survey showed three-fourths of CWA members would be willing to pay a surcharge on their state waterfowl and upland validations to pay for increased nesting habitat, which is desperately needed if we want to see improved mallard and pheasant populations in California.

In addition, three deeply troubling bills did not pass, and a fourth was substantially modified. The bills that didn't pass were AB 1223, a huge, punitive tax on guns and ammunition; AB 702, which would have increased fees and restrictions for dog breeders; and SB 252, a ban on bear hunting. SB 264, a bill to prohibit selling guns or ammunition on most public property, would have affected numerous CWA fundraising banquets, but it was amended to apply only to the Orange County Fair and Event Center.



PHOTO: HOLLY HEYSER

Assemblymember Cecilia Aguilar-Curry, author of CWA's AB 614, releases egg salvage ducklings into a wetland.

## VIRTUAL AUCTIONS FILL A GAP

Many businesses were hit hard during the pandemic, especially small businesses and nonprofits that normally rely heavily on in-person events for income. CWA was no exception. With live auctions, fundraisers and dinners suddenly coming to a halt due to restrictions, CWA had to find a way to continue raising money for our programs.

That's where the weekly virtual auctions came in. In lieu of local events that had been cancelled, CWA moved to online auctions to put items like hunting gear, guns, hunts, art and sports memorabilia up for bid.

For those who missed the excitement of typical auction settings, CWA also held several virtual live auctions for the first time ever. With an actual auctioneer, raffle drums and streaming in real time, it was as close as it could get to a normal year's auction while still social distanc-

ing. It was also a great opportunity for people who had been unable to attend banquets for a variety of reasons.

Our supporters stepped up to place their bids, generating money to carry out programs that save waterfowl and wetlands, fight for hunters' rights, educate kids about wildlife and lobby for bills that help reach CWA's goals while fighting the ones that don't.

Members' participation in these events was absolutely crucial during this financially difficult time. One such supporter is Frank Ginotti, an avid waterfowl hunter who has diligently bid on plenty of items during the virtual auctions.

Ginotti is a long-time Life Member, as well as a Major Benefactor. He decided to give even more by bidding on

and winning all sorts of items including shirts, raffles and a variety of guns.

When asked why he chose to keep giving to the organization so much during the pandemic, Ginotti said, "Charities are being hit the hardest, and I wanted to support CWA because hunting is one of my passions."

People like Ginotti helped keep CWA afloat last year. Thank you to all the sponsors, donors and corporate partners who make it possible for CWA to grow California's waterfowl populations, wetlands and hunter-conservationist communities.

And the good news is even with the return of our live banquets, the virtual auction is so popular that we're continuing to offer it!

**Go to [calwaterfowl.org/events/categories/virtual-events](https://calwaterfowl.org/events/categories/virtual-events) to get in on the action!**

# MIGRATION EDUCATION

Normally, CWA's education team visits schools all over California to present their programs to students ranging from kindergarten to eighth grade and to take them outside on field trips.

But with most in-person events cancelled in the 2020-21 school year due to last year's lockdown, California Waterfowl Education Coordinator Molly Maupin went above and beyond to ensure that waterfowl and wetland conservation education didn't stop.

Maupin rose to the occasion and prepared plenty of new, engaging digital resources for students to access online. As a result, despite pandemic restrictions and school shutdowns, she was able to bring the outdoors to students stuck inside.

Ms. Molly, as she is known, reached 1,300 students with over 50 virtual presentations. The presentations teach students about nests, nesting behavior, waterfowl and their habitat through fun hands-on activities in science and art. Students get to look at real nests, play interactive games, and observe real waterfowl specimens. The virtual learning turned out to be

a hit. The kids were excited to participate, and in the return surveys, all teachers noted that they would book a virtual program again.

"The students truly enjoyed the presentation. It was perfectly geared for the age group and their knowledge level. We appreciate you and the great work

flexible!"

In addition to posting plenty of on-line resources including worksheets, activities and curriculum on the CWA website, the education team also created new video content that has reached almost 10,000 people.

One example is the "How to draw a duck" video, which led to a Draw-A-Duck Contest. Kids used their newly-learned art skills to create and submit their drawings for the chance to win a California Waterfowl Sprig membership.

Parents and kids alike were thrilled about the contest. "Thank you for giving our students something exciting to do during this difficult time!" said one parent. Another parent said, "(My



Layla Sabalow holds up her entry in the Draw-a-Duck Contest, one of our most popular education activities in 2020.

PHOTO: RYAN SABALOW

you do to educate and inform the future of conservation," said one teacher about the virtual program.

Another teacher said, "I really appreciate that you are still working hard to present to our students. Last year, those experiences were SO NEEDED to break up our routine! Thanks for being

son) probably painted two dozen more after we found out about the program!"

Despite a difficult year, the education team has worked hard to continue providing content to teach kids about the outdoors. Select in-person programs and field trips for students have already returned!

Check out all of our education resources, INCLUDING FREE VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON PRESENTATIONS, at [calwaterfowl.org/education-programs](https://calwaterfowl.org/education-programs)

A mallard swims in the little remaining water at the Lower Klamath NWR in early August 2021.

# A RAY OF HOPE FOR LOWER KLAMATH

PHOTOS: HOLLY HEYSER



Coyote tracks mingle with waterfowl prints at Sheepy Lake, where dropping water levels gave predators unprecedented access.



This molting greenhead was stuck at a disappearing Sheepy Lake this summer, unable to fly.

It has been, for the most part, a horrible year for the Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge in California's northeastern corner. Federal law and government policies have ensured the refuge is always last in line for water, increasingly getting none. Likely a thousand duck broods and countless other waterbird nests and broods were wiped out this summer as water evaporated, exposing once-safe havens to predators. In late summer, mature ducks faced the same risks, stuck in disappearing ponds and ditches while they molted, which leaves them flightless for 30 to 60 days.

But you can mark 2021 as a pivotal year, because a key solution orchestrated by CWA and its Lower Klamath Refuge Task Force came to fruition: Its proposed transfer of a permanent irrigation right for the refuge was approved in late August by the Oregon Water Resources Department, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation allowed some of that water to flow onto the refuge starting Sept. 3.

Only about 700 acre-feet of water was expected to make it onto the refuge before the Sept. 30 end of the irrigation season. That's a drop in the bucket compared with

Lower Klamath's need of about 100,000 acre-feet per year to provide all of the habitat it's intended to provide.

But it proved it is possible to transfer senior water rights for the refuge and deliver that water, none of which was certain up to that point.

The full water right being transferred to CWA by Agency Ranch in Oregon's Wood River Valley – owned by the family of Kurt Thomas – is for 3,750 acre-feet per year, which will significantly help wildlife that depend on the refuge every year going forward. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the incredibly generous donors who contributed a whopping \$750,000 for a down payment on this transfer.

Now CWA is in a position to begin negotiations with other parties interested in transferring additional water rights to the refuge. Equally important, we are continuing our efforts to secure federal funding to purchase current and future water rights for the refuge.

While there is much work left to be done, we can finally say progress has been made.

**Stay up to date and get involved at [calwaterfowl.org/lower-klamath](https://calwaterfowl.org/lower-klamath)**

## PINTAIL LEGACY SOCIETY PROFILE

# BOB HEITMAN

Bob Heitman was born with a silver spoon in his mouth – certainly not because of money, but because of opportunity. At an early age, his dad exposed him to the love of his life: hunting!

He was raised in Lafayette in the 1950s when it was a quiet rural town – no freeways, no BART – where family orchards dominated the landscape. He learned, early on, to appreciate the beauty of nature and the conservation of same. His hunting adventures took place in Colusa at his grandfather's Dairy Ranch, which bordered the Sacramento River. The habitat was ideal for upland game and waterfowl.

Thanksgiving always included a family pheasant hunt and a limit of wild roosters was the rule.

Christmas was celebrated with waterfowl hunting, either on the Ranch or a neighboring property. "My first duck was a hen wigeon, first goose a cackler."

Times changed, and the Ranch sold. "My dad had a patient who was selling a share at Castle Duck Club in Merced. Lucky for me, he bought it and, eventually, purchased a share for me." The early season

pintail hunting was phenomenal. The limit was seven. Most of the members were Air Force veterans. The stories around the fireside were legendary.

Education was important and after graduating from UC Berkeley, with majors in zoology and sociology, he attended USC, where he obtained his doctorate in dental surgery and became a third-generation

ta corn. As a result, they hunted Mildred, Mandeville, Jones and Andrus islands.

Now retired, he still enjoys his beloved hunting, admiring his partner, Candy, a black Lab, retrieving the birds. He also enjoys his hobbies of gardening, painting and flocking his own decoys, and managing four wood duck boxes.



BOB HEITMAN

"Waterfowling has always been a positive, integral part of my life. I became a CWA Life Member in the 1980s. Now, it is important for me to raise the commitment. Through its habitat, advocacy and conservation efforts, CWA represents the California waterfowler's best interests. With that in mind, I am proud to be a member of the Pintail Legacy Society."

dentist. Every free moment during the season still included duck hunting.

His dental practice in Walnut Creek necessitated bringing the hunting opportunity closer to home. He was able to lease a small piece of ground at Tule Belle Duck Club in the Suisun Marsh. It was pintail paradise! A friend introduced him to Del-

*California Waterfowl's Pintail Legacy Society is made of supporters who have left a gift to CWA through their estate to ensure a strong future for waterfowl, wetlands and hunting in California. It is our pleasure to profile Pintail Legacy Society member Bob Heitman in this annual report.*

Explore your choices at [calwaterfowl.org/donate/legacy-society](https://calwaterfowl.org/donate/legacy-society)

# OUR MAJOR DONORS

As of June 30, 2021

California Waterfowl is proud to have the support of nearly 1,200 Major Donors – a number that increased substantially as our generous supporters helped us meet the challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is our great honor to thank these individuals, companies, organizations and

foundations for their extraordinary level of commitment. We wouldn't be here without them.

For information about our **Major Donor Program**, please visit [calwaterfowl.org/donate](http://calwaterfowl.org/donate), or call Vice President for Fund and Membership Development Scott Mueller at 916-648-1406, ext. 142.

Many Major Donors are also members of CWA's **Pintail Legacy Society**, supporters who have chosen to leave gifts through their estates. For information about estate and other tax-advantaged giving, please contact Gordon L. Nelson, CPA, CFP®, at 435-213-9986 or [plannedgiving@calwaterfowl.org](mailto:plannedgiving@calwaterfowl.org).

‡ denotes Life Member ([calwaterfowl.org/join](http://calwaterfowl.org/join)) ◊ denotes Pintail Legacy Society member ([calwaterfowl.org/donate/legacy-society](http://calwaterfowl.org/donate/legacy-society)) \* denotes deceased

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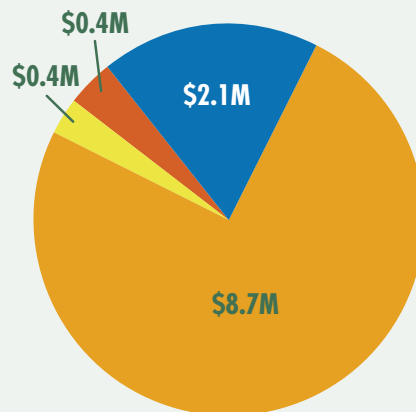
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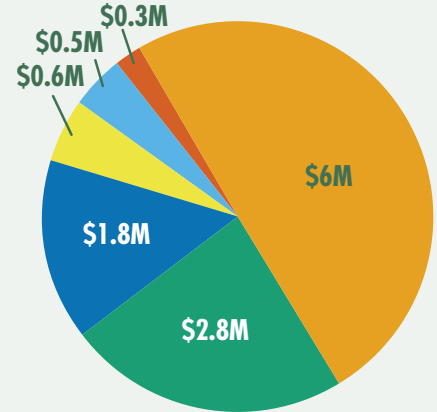
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Accountability | Passion | Dedication | Community  
Family | Inclusion | Diversity | Innovation

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