



C A L I F O R N I A W A T E R F O W L

2023

ANNUAL REPORT

2022-23 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

31,589 ACRES

Wetland, riparian, breeding-habitat and altered agricultural practice work completed in California in 2022. Of that, 28,079 acres were public land, and 1,025 acres were wheat and other grain fields where harvest was delayed to allow duck nests to hatch. Total value of work was \$6.3 million, funded with public grants, private matching dollars and CWA funds.

5,750 DUCKS AND GEESE

Banded by CWA biologists and partners in 2022.

22,597 WOOD DUCKS

Hatched from nest boxes in the California Wood Duck Program in 2022, for a total of 960,361 since the program's inception in 1991.

2,179 STUDENTS

Learned about waterfowl, wetlands and the role hunters play in conserving both through field trips, presentations and hands-on projects.

2,880 HUNTERS

Enjoyed private-land hunts through CWA's

Hunt Program — a record high. Nearly 650 of these participants were active-duty service members or military veterans who enjoyed their excursions at no cost, thanks to generous donors.

1,376

CWA supporters who are part of the Major Donor Program. (See more starting on pages 30 and 31.)

65

The number of in-person banquets and other fundraising events held by CWA in 2022. These and online events netted nearly \$6 million to support CWA's mission and vision.

\$2 MILLION

The estimated amount of money that can begin flowing into increasing nesting habitat for ducks and pheasants starting this year through the Nesting Bird Habitat Incentive Program, thanks to passage of CWA-sponsored AB 614. (See more on page 28.)

6,771

The number of messages sent to legislators last year by CWA supporters about various bills we supported or opposed.

Looking for more details about CWA's work? Go to calwaterfowl.org/annual-report and check out our 2022-23 Fact Sheet.



WHAT WE DO

WATERFOWL

- Band waterfowl for research
- Rescue imperiled wild duck nests
- Help give duck nests in California farm fields more time to hatch
- Provide nest boxes for wood ducks
- Engage volunteers in hands-on work

WETLANDS

- Restore and renew wintering habitat
- Add breeding habitat
- Manage CWA-owned wetlands
- Assist duck clubs with grant-writing

HUNTING

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

EDUCATION

- Host camps for waterfowl hunters of all levels
- Junior Duck Stamp Program
- Offer scholarships for college and camps

ADVOCACY

- Defend hunting and hunters' gun rights
- Call for optimal hunting regulations
- Fight for water for managed wetlands
- Sponsor conservation-friendly bills

FROM CWA CAMP ATTENDEE TO WARDEN



Austin Smith, left, was presented with the 2021 Wildlife Officer of the Year award by CWA Regional Biologist Kevin Vella

Hunter and warden Austin Smith has investigated countless reports of violations. He's arrested poachers and caught drug traffickers. He's even saved a woman's life by following her tracks for miles into a wildlife area and locating her after she went missing. Smith's exceptional achievements recently earned him the CWA 2021 Wildlife Officer of the Year award. And he traces the start of his wildlife officer path — and his love for hunting — back to 2009, when he attended Bird Haven Ranch's very first College Hunt Camp, hosted by Paul and Sandi Bonderson in collaboration with California Waterfowl.

At the time, Smith had just recently graduated from UC Davis with his degree in wildlife, fish and conservation biology and was working as a scientific aide, when a notification hit his student email inbox announcing the three-day waterfowl hunt program for UC Davis wildlife students. No one in Smith's family hunted, including him. But he was a fisherman who loved the outdoors, and he had always been interested in giving duck hunting a try. He'd just never had the chance — until now.

Smith applied for the program, was handpicked along with several other students, and before long, the students found themselves at a wetland paradise completing their hunter's ed training, shooting clay pigeons and learning about waterfowl. On the last day, he met up with Jake Messerli, now Chief Operating Officer of CWA, and together they made their way out to cornfields in the dark. There, he shot down his first-ever bird: a drake wood duck. And then another. And again and again, until he'd bagged a limit of wood ducks.

So, what was different for him after college camp? Smith says his view about hunting's importance didn't actually really change — knowledge about how much hunters do for conservation is pretty much drilled into UC Davis wildlife students' heads. But what he did take away was a change in his perception of just how incredibly fun and exciting hunting is.

Smith's experience also presented him with the opportunity to meet and talk to Mike Carion, chief of law enforcement at the Department of Fish and Wildlife, who had attended the camp as a personal hunt guide. At the time, Smith knew he was passionate about the field of fish and wildlife, but he didn't know exactly what he wanted to do. After chatting with Chief Carion about his career as a warden and receiving advice on how to pursue that path, Smith was inspired.

About a year after working as a scientific aide, Smith became a full-time environmental scientist, conducting bighorn sheep and marsh bird surveys. He then applied to become a game warden, and after enduring countless tests, interviews and months of rigorous training, Smith graduated from the academy and was assigned to San Diego County to start solo patrol in 2016. He has since handled caseloads ranging from commercial fishing and marine resource violations, unlawful take of deer and turkeys, exceeded dove limits, waterfowl violations, and spotlighting, to illegal firearms and narcotics possession.

In just his first six years as a wildlife officer, Smith issued over 1,300 citations, and he takes immense pride in doing his job well. "I'm a fisherman and hunter. I care about the natural resources, and when I catch someone knowingly doing wrong, I take it personally," said Smith. "Catching those people is fulfilling, and saving resources for everyone else to use equally and lawfully is a big deal to me."

Recalling how much Chief Carion's mentorship meant to him when he first embarked on his law enforcement journey, Smith is determined to aid other officers in the same way. He enjoys mentoring new wardens, teaching them the skills he's acquired and helping them understand warrant writing and evidence submission.

Still an avid hunter today, Smith goes waterfowling every year. Since College Camp, he's also taken up hunting other species including deer, quail and dove, and just last year he traveled to Alaska in pursuit of caribou. 🦋



Austin Smith with his limit of ducks after hunting at Bird Haven

BIG CHANGES COMING FOR CALIFORNIA WETLANDS

In the last year, California Waterfowl has spent just over \$4.5 million carrying out wetland, riparian, breeding-habitat and food plot development work on over 28,000 acres of

CWA restored Wister Unit's S22 field in 2020, which is now providing excellent habitat to waterfowl and other migrants throughout the year. Photo by Chadd Santerre



public land. Think that's a lot? Well, wait until you see what we've got planned for the upcoming year.

The total secured funding for projects scheduled for the 2023-24 construction season amounts to a whopping \$14.2 million for

public lands — that's over a 215% increase compared to the previous fiscal year. The money, which will come from both state and federal grant programs that CWA staff has submitted proposals to over the last two years, will help CWA enhance wildlife areas all over California that countless hunters, birders and outdoor enthusiasts visit yearly. This is all made possible by CWA's partnerships with state and federal agency staff that manage these areas for the public.

Our biologists have been tirelessly developing and surveying projects, writing and submitting proposals, and driving up and down the state to find ways to restore and enhance wetlands. Their work will improve management capabilities, establish stable and secure infrastructure, conserve water supplies and increase public hunting opportunities. The ultimate goal of each project is to increase habitat acreage where possible, increase food resources and provide expanded nesting cover for millions of migratory and resident waterfowl. Funded projects will be taking place from the Colorado River to Tule Lake over the next two years.

"CWA's wetland team has built strong relationships with the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and US Fish and Wildlife Service staff over the years," said Chadd Santerre, CWA wetland programs supervisor. "We are able to walk these areas, develop and then design projects that resolve their issues when it comes to management.

"Ultimately," he continued, "our job is to make management easier for them so they are able to perform their jobs more efficiently, which improves habitat conditions for wildlife on these public areas. Having gained their trust in our abilities to provide them with a great product, in the end, has led to more project development opportunities over the years."

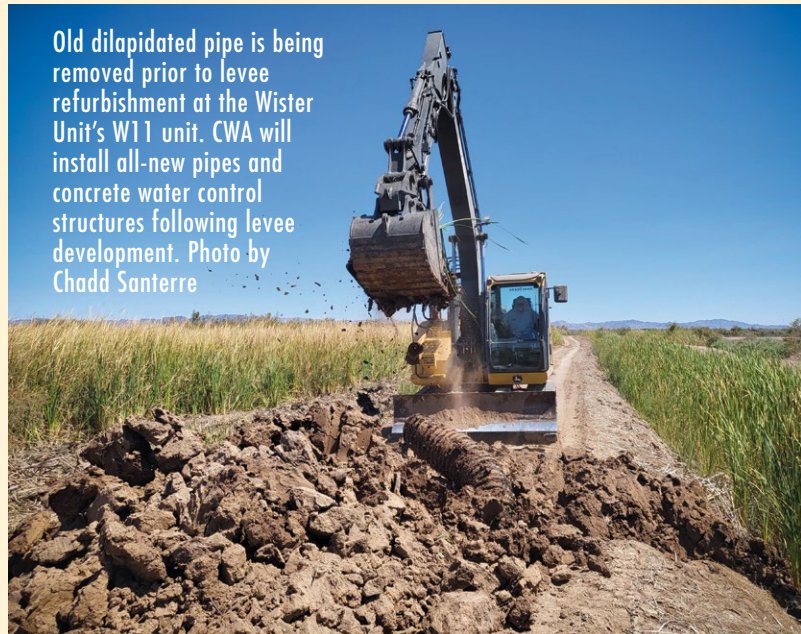
One of the larger projects will take place in Southern California at Imperial Wildlife Area's Wister Unit (Y15, W11

A&C and W12 units), involving 805 acres on a heavily used state-owned public property. The Wildlife Conservation Board awarded CWA \$2.4 million, and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act provided \$650,000 in grant funding for this cooperative project with DFW to complete wetland and upland habitat restoration at the wildlife area, located near the town of Niland in Imperial County.

The project will restore a total of 773 acres of seasonal wetlands and 32 acres of native uplands, all within the public hunt area, with part of the project improving hunt locations and access for people to get to those sites. Results will enhance management capabilities allowing for improved feed production by DFW staff in the years to come. More wintering resources for waterfowl and wetland-dependent species will provide everything they need throughout their stay within the Imperial Valley.

The CWA wetland team is currently starting construction for this summer while simultaneously working on developing

Old dilapidated pipe is being removed prior to levee refurbishment at the Wister Unit's W11 unit. CWA will install all-new pipes and concrete water control structures following levee development. Photo by Chadd Santerre



proposals to submit for future work that will take place in the 2025-26 construction seasons. We are always developing our project load up to two years in advance of implementation, since it takes that long to secure and coordinate funding for each project.

If you hunt any of our public wildlife areas or refuges and ever have questions about projects CWA is undertaking, feel free to reach out to your regional biologist for answers. They'll be more than willing to talk to you and give updates on what they're doing. Your membership and support of CWA help make all this development and project implementation possible. Thank you! 🦋



Newly implemented program **HELPS NESTING BIRDS**

Back in 2019, California Waterfowl surveyed our members and supporters to ask if they would be willing to pay an extra \$5 for waterfowl and upland hunting validations to support California's breeding mallard and ring-necked pheasant populations, which have plummeted since the 90s and are hurting from lack of habitat. Out of over 1,500 survey participants, almost three out of four California duck hunters voted yes. And now, it's time to put our money where our mouth is.

The Nesting Bird Habitat Incentive Program (NBHIP), designed to provide financial incentives to selected landowners who cultivate or retain upland cover and other vegetation to benefit nesting wildlife, recently kicked off. Funding for the program comes from a \$10 surcharge per upland game bird and state duck hunting validations. This is expected to generate over \$2 million every year, with every single dollar from new stamp surcharges used specifically for the NBHIP's purposes.

One of the reasons why the Assembly Appropriations Committee had raised the surcharges to around \$10 per validation was because \$5 was unlikely to be enough to meet total landowner demand. OK, so it may not be the original fee we proposed; but for a lot less than what most hunters spend on gear, you can ensure you're putting your hard-earned money toward something that directly benefits birds, which will ultimately benefit hunters, too.

"It's great to see this much-needed habitat program finally getting off the ground," stated Mark Hennelly, CWA's vice president of advocacy. "While our local mallard and pheasant decline involves many factors, by putting more quality nesting habitat in the right areas, the NBHIP will definitely support those gamebird populations and their eventual recovery."

The NBHIP was originally created by AB 2697, a California Waterfowl-sponsored bill signed by then-Governor Jerry Brown in 2018. The program's funding was tied to Proposition 3, a water infrastructure and conservation bond measure that narrowly failed on the statewide ballot. The program had remained unfunded up until 2021, when Governor Newsom signed the passage of CWA-sponsored AB 614 (Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, D-Winters) into law, finally providing funding to implement the NBHIP. Numerous other hunting and conservation groups supported AB 614.

CWA launched landowner applications for the 2023 season in April and notified landowners of their enrollment status in the incentive program in May. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife administers the NBHIP and is currently subcontracting some of the work to CWA. CWA works with the Department to collaborate with landowners or lessees who agree to manage their properties according to a management plan developed by biologists designed to promote upland breeding habitat.

When selecting NBHIP fields, CWA gives priority to grants or contracts with landowners that include lands adjacent to, or in close proximity to, waterfowl brood habitat, especially if they are willing to enter into grants or contracts for multiple years. Selected farmers must leave at least eight inches of vegetation on 60% of their cover crops undisturbed until July 15, with fields having reliable brood water within a half mile of the fallow fields.

Working together with United States Geological Survey staff, CWA's biologists will visit the sites and use real-time satellite imagery to regularly monitor for compliance and check the enrolled fields for nesting activity. Once landowners have fulfilled their agreement, they get their incentive payment, while waterfowl and upland game birds get their vegetative cover for nesting. 🦆

Our continued fight for **LOWER KLAMATH**

California Waterfowl continues to fight relentlessly to obtain water for the Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge, one of the most crucial parts of the Pacific Flyway that provides habitat for countless waterfowl and other wildlife.

This spring, we were able to purchase 2,546 acre-feet of water that was delivered to Unit 2 from the Klamath Drainage District, a region located next door to Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge that is important to the basin's agriculture. The Klamath Drainage District recycles drainage and other water within its facilities, and that water can then be sent into the refuge for wetlands or used to flood fields. Lower Klamath is still well behind historical water deliveries despite a relatively wet winter in the area, but this recent purchase of water provides some relief.

We are also looking to deliver 3,750 acre-feet of water at the beginning of July to keep Units 2 and 3 flooded. This will help support locally breeding waterfowl like mallards, gadwall and Canada geese by providing waterfowl brood and molting habitat throughout the summer. The water comes from a water transfer effort from a landowner in the Wood River Valley in Oregon, which will ultimately lead to a new, permanent water right for Lower Klamath. CWA's acquisition of water rights was made possible by generous donors who contributed money for the down payment.

In the past year, CWA's Klamath Task Force has taken every opportunity they can to meet with government officials and stakeholders to have an impact on key issues. They've flown to Washington, D.C., and discussed the Klamath water crisis, pintail limits and refuge hunting issues with members of the U.S. House of Representatives and top U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff. They've also attended a Klamath workshop hosted by the Department of Interior, with over 100 other stakeholders present, to brainstorm funding opportunities and projects, and to strengthen partnerships to restore the Klamath Basin. And they continue to discuss the strategy of more water rights acquisition as a viable option of securing new water supplies for the refuge.

CWA is grateful for any amount of water we can get for the parched refuge. But the fact remains that the refuge still needs at least tens of thousands more acre-feet of water to maintain quality habitat. To learn more about the Klamath situation and how you can help us acquire more water, visit calwaterfowl.org/lower-klamath. 🦆

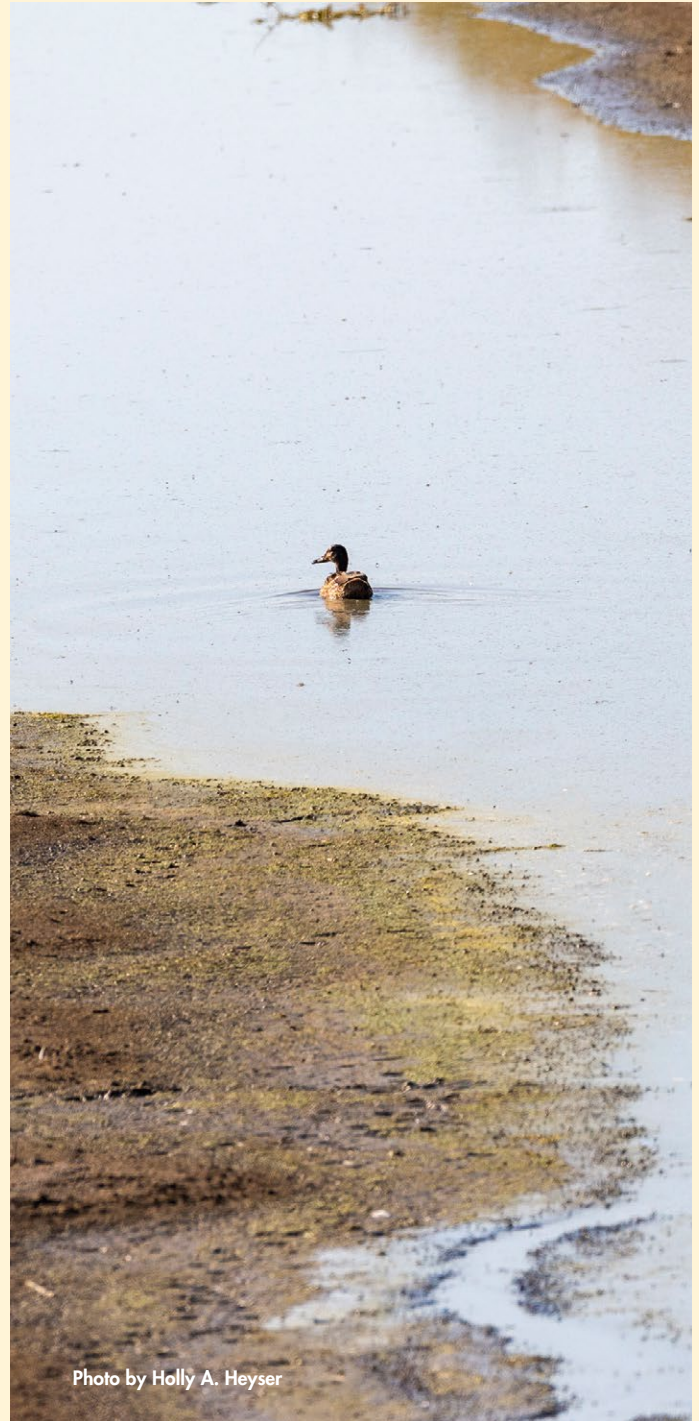


Photo by Holly A. Heyser

Chapters that earned the Golden Pintail award for having 50% or more net/gross efficiency for their banquet in 2022:

AFF-Lincoln	Colusa	Hollister Land &	Newport	Pleasanton/	Santa Rosa
Bishop	Dixon	Cattle	North Delta	Tri-Valley	Suisun Field Day
Blackhawk	East County	Last Stand BBQ	North Delta Shoot	Redding	Willows
Chico	Fresno	Los Gatos Bocce	Orange County	Rice n Dice	
Chico Shoot	Gridley	Mt. Shasta	Palo Alto	Rodeo Dinner	
Chino	Hollister	Napa		Santa Margarita	

MAJOR DONOR PROFILE

Longtime CWA supporter John Eudy didn't start hunting waterfowl until his late 20s, but once a friend finally convinced him to give it a try, he was instantly hooked. Now 68, Eudy still spends much of his time with waterfowl on his mind. If he's not chasing ducks in the Suisun Marsh at Wheeler Island Duck Club, where he is president, you'll probably find him dabbling in some other wildlife- or agriculture-related project.

That's partly because Eudy owns a ranch in Angels Camp that he bought in the early 2000s. An agricultural lake,



holding water year-round thanks to water rights, sits on the nearly 15-acre property. When Eudy noticed wood ducks hanging around the area, he decided to start his own wood duck project by the lake.

CWA Wood Duck Program Coordinator Brian Huber has worked extensively with Eudy to help set up the project and witness its evolution. Just last year, 29 ducklings were hatched and banded from Eudy's 11 nest boxes. Over the years, CWA has even brought additional rescued wood ducklings down to the lake to be released. "John's a down-to-earth, genuine person who's always been a huge supporter of our waterfowl programs, having donated both time and money to our wood duck program," said Huber.

Eudy is currently a Ruby Benefactor and has no plans of stopping there: "I'm working my way up to the next donor level," said Eudy. When asked about

JOHN EUDY, WOOD DUCK ENTHUSIAST



why he chooses to donate to CWA year after year, Eudy said, "CWA does a tremendous job defending hunting at the state level, hosting programs like the Egg Salvage and Wood Duck Program, and helping to preserve the environment and what we love. It's a good organization, and everything they do is in the best interest of everybody."

When he's not occupied with monitoring his nest boxes, the rest of Eudy's ranch keeps him plenty busy. Using olives harvested from the trees he grows on his property, Eudy produced his Dogtown Olive Oil, which recently took home a Best in Class award at the 2023 California Olive Oil Competition. And using grapes from his vineyard, he produces his own cases of wine. The wine's name? Aix Sponsa Petite Sirah, in

honor of the Wood Duck Program and the birds that thrive on the lake's riparian habitat fronting his vineyard.

Eudy is also part of the Calaveras County Fish and Game board, which works to enhance both fishing and hunting experiences in the county. For about a decade, he's helped sponsor the annual kid's fishing clinic in Murphy, an event offering free food, refreshments and loaned fishing equipment for children and their families to enjoy a day at the creek. Eudy is passionate about outreach and education to promote an active outdoor lifestyle, and with the future of his own kids and grandkids to think about, he especially strives to enhance the preservation of legacy outdoor activities like fishing and hunting for the next generation. 🦆

OUR MAJOR DONORS As of March 31, 2023

California Waterfowl is proud to have the support of nearly 1,400 Major Donors, and 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, 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.

‡ denotes Life Member (calwaterfowl.org/join) ♦ denotes Pintail Legacy Society member (calwaterfowl.org/donate/legacy-society) * denotes deceased

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Clarence Williams‡

Rodney W. Williams
Jonathan R. Wills‡
Howard D. Wilson‡
Kevin J. Wilson‡
Sean O. Wilson‡
Wine Valley Catering
Wing and Barrel Ranch
Kevin A. Winter‡
Wishing Corner
Michael W. Wolter‡
Bill Wood
Veronica Woodruff‡
Jeff R. Woodyard
Sam Wool
Timothy F. Worley‡
Fred W. Worrell*‡
Richard G. Wright Jr.‡
Lilia Wu
John Yaralian
Woody A. Yerxa‡
Daniel Yorke
Patrick Yosick‡
Stephen O. Yotter‡
F. Chandler Young Jr.
Charles Zakskorn‡
Jefferson R. Zalinski‡
David M. Zamzow‡
John H. Zeiter, MD‡

CORPORATE PARTNERS

California Waterfowl is grateful for the support of its corporate partners, who share our commitment to waterfowl and wetland conservation, and to the future of hunting. For information about our Corporate Partner Program, please visit calwaterfowl.org/corporate-partnership.



AUDITED 2021-22 FINANCIALS (most recent available)

INDEPENDENT RATING

California Waterfowl has a three-star rating from Charity Navigator, and it earns the highest rating for accountability and transparency. Learn more at charitynavigator.org.

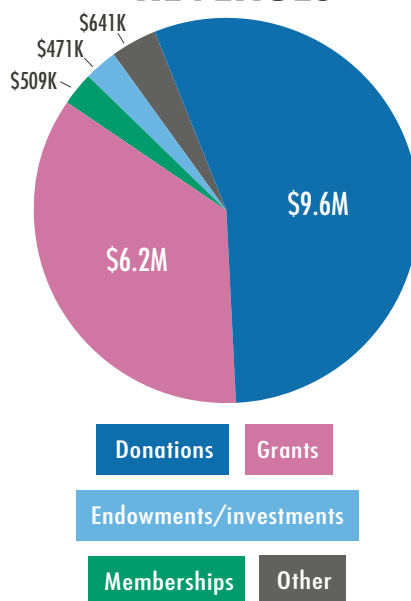
ACCREDITED

CWA is proud to be an Accredited Land Trust (2021-2026), having passed rigorous scrutiny of its finances, ethical conduct, governance and land stewardship by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission.

TRANSPARENCY

You can find our latest tax return (Form 990) and audited financials at calwaterfowl.org/audits-tax-returns.

REVENUES



EXPENDITURES

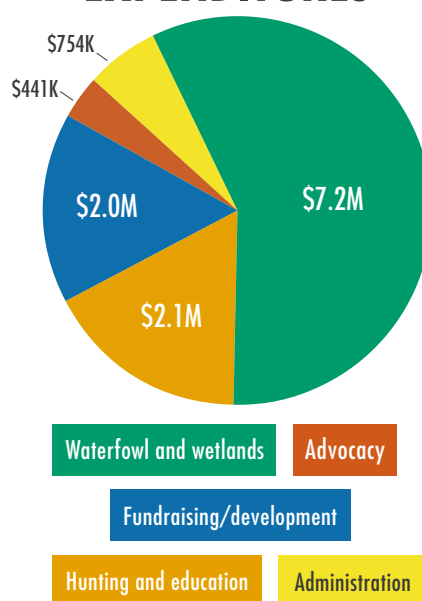




Photo by Wayne Tilcock



OUR VISION

We envision a California with thriving waterfowl populations, vibrant wetland ecosystems and respected hunting communities.

OUR VALUES

Stewardship | Sustainability | Integrity | Accountability |
Passion | Dedication | Community | Family | Inclusion |
Diversity | Innovation

California Waterfowl | 1346 Blue Oaks Blvd., Roseville CA 95678 | 916-648-1406 | www.calwaterfowl.org | EIN 94-1149574