

California Waterfowl 2021-22 Fact Sheet

California Waterfowl is a 501c3 conservation organization founded in 1945 that works in habitat restoration, waterfowl research, hunting, education and advocacy. Our mission is to grow California’s waterfowl populations, wetlands and hunter-conservationist communities. Our vision is a California with thriving waterfowl populations, vibrant wetland ecosystems and respected hunting communities.



This fact sheet contains information about our latest work, and most headings are links to areas of our website that contain overviews about each program. The organization’s latest annual report, published each year in the summer issue of the magazine, can be accessed [here](#). The annual report is a higher-level look at CWA’s work, with a selection of highlights from data contained in this document, short articles detailing work we’re proud of, and a list of the organization’s Major Donors.

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PROGRAMS

ADVOCACY

CWA’s advocacy team had two milestone accomplishments in 2021:

LOWER KLAMATH

With the help of the organization’s Lower Klamath Task Force and a handful of incredible donors, CWA successfully accomplished a transfer of 3,750 acre-feet per year of water rights from a ranch in Oregon’s Wood River Valley to the Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge, and successfully delivered some of that water before the end of irrigation season. Up to this point, no one knew if it could be done – water delivery is complex, and water law is doubly so.

This development is important: This vast, historic wetland is dying because it is receiving almost no water from the federal government that owns and operates it. This transfer is small relative to Lower Klamath’s needs – about 100,000 acre-feet per year – but it was groundbreaking, and could pave the way for more transfers of up to 30,000 acre-feet from interested sellers.

CWA is on track to make the second of three payments on the transfer April 1, 2022, and is seeking government funding to make the final \$6.2 million payment in 2023.

NESTING HABITAT FOR MALLARDS AND PHEASANTS

Years of effort culminated in success in 2021 when the Legislature passed, and the governor signed, AB 614, a bill to provide incentives to maintain nesting cover on both private and public property. California’s breeding population of mallards has declined substantially in recent years, and the lack of breeding habitat is the cause.

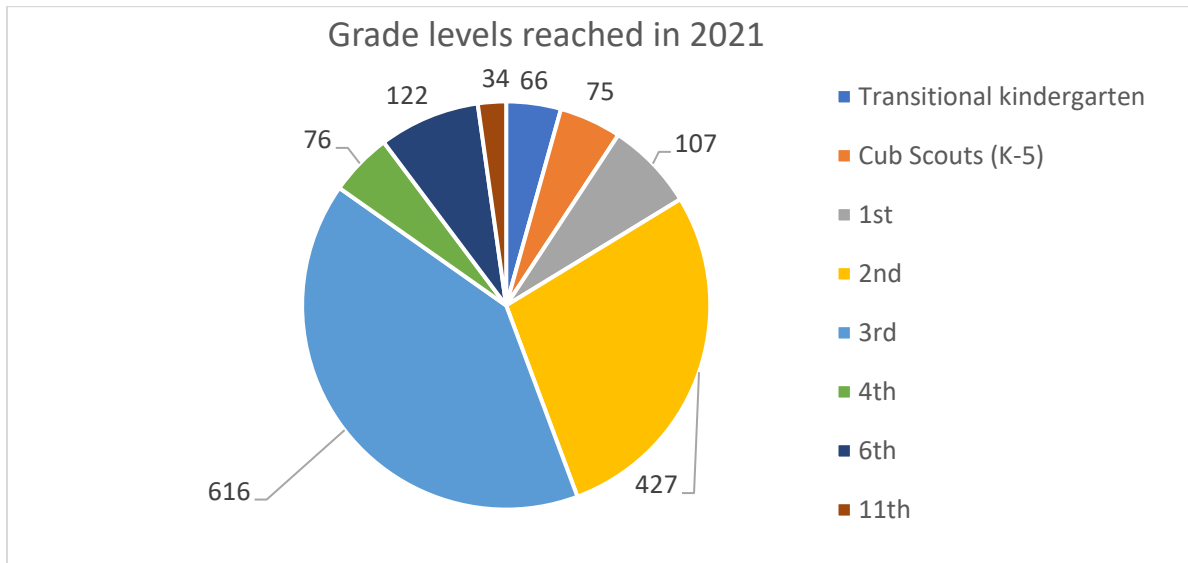
[Another CWA-sponsored bill](#) created the state Nesting Bird Habitat Improvement Program in 2018, but funding was to come through a state ballot proposition that ultimately did not pass. AB 614 adds a \$10 surcharge to state duck and upland game bird validations, which is expected to raise more than \$2 million per year. The surcharge is twice what we asked for – about three-fourths of members and supporters [surveyed in 2019](#) said they would support a \$5 surcharge – but accepting the increase was the only way to get the bill passed. One of the efforts that could receive funding from this program is CWA’s [Delayed Wheat Harvest Incentive Program](#). [Click here to read more about the new surcharge](#).

OTHER LEGISLATION

In 2021, three CWA-supported bills passed and were signed by the governor, and *all* five bills we opposed were either defeated or watered down substantially, including stopping AB 1223, which would have imposed significant new taxes on the purchase of firearms and ammunition.

EDUCATION

The Covid pandemic had a serious impact on school operations, but that didn't stop CWA's education team from reaching California school children: We made 59 presentations, reaching 1,523 students. Slightly over half of the presentations were in person, with the remainder virtual. Field trips and participation in festivals – important ways to reach both youth and the public – were all on hold due to the pandemic.



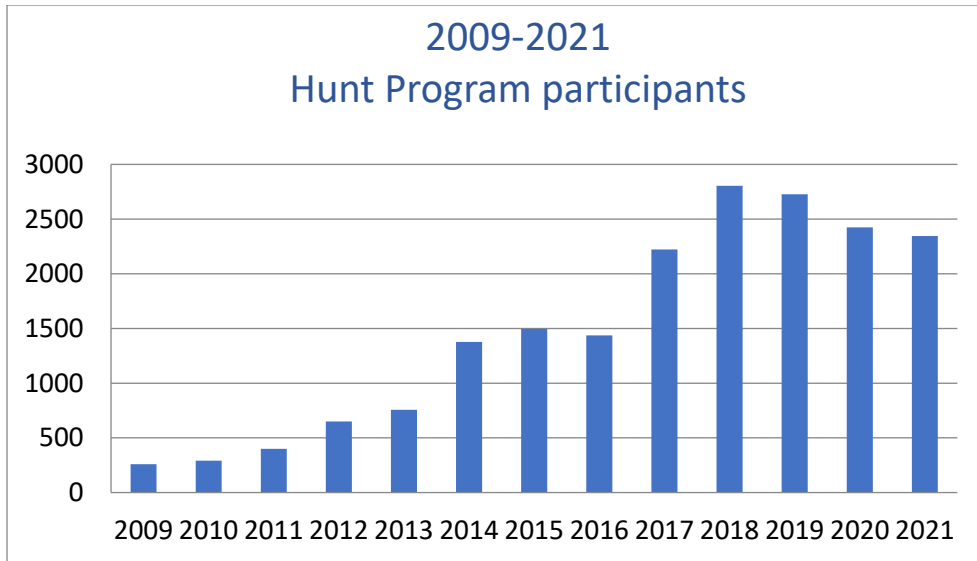
HUNTING

HUNT PROGRAM

CWA's Hunt Program received the highest level of applications ever in 2021-22, mirroring the trend in the state's reservation application system. The Covid pandemic boosted hunter numbers substantially in the 2020-21 season, and while waterfowl hunter numbers went down in 2021-22, they were still higher than pre-pandemic levels. Compounding that demand, drought meant much of rice country could not be hunted, increasing pressure on both public lands and the Hunt Program.

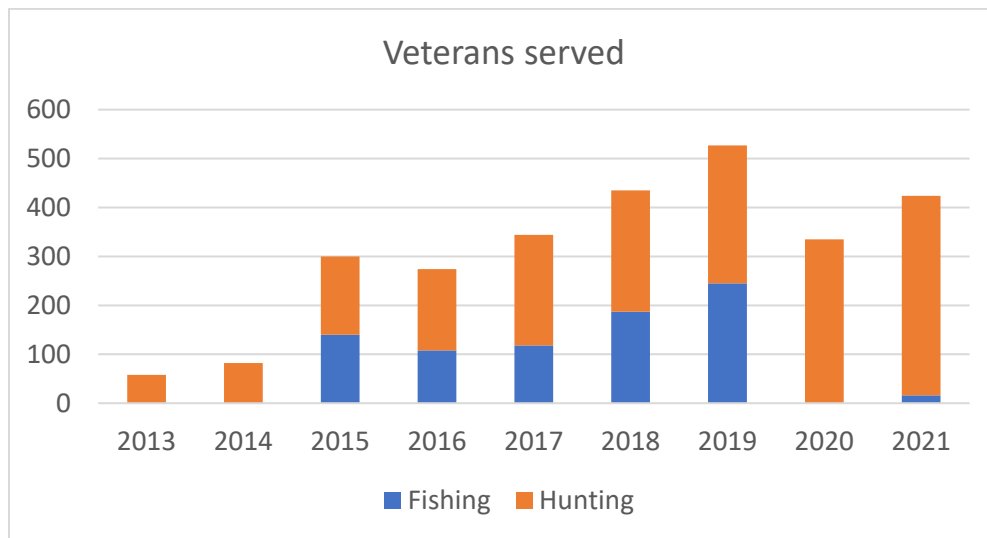
In addition, Hunt Program capacity remained lower than it had been in recent years due to the drought. Nevertheless, in 2021, the Hunt Program provided more than 1,000 individual opportunities, serving 2,345 hunters.

In addition to increasing the *number* of opportunities available to California hunters, the Hunt Program also increases the *quality* of opportunities. Participant surveys yield high praise for the helpful staff, the quality of the habitat, the provision of decoys and the continued streamlining of the application system.



VETERAN HUNT PROGRAM

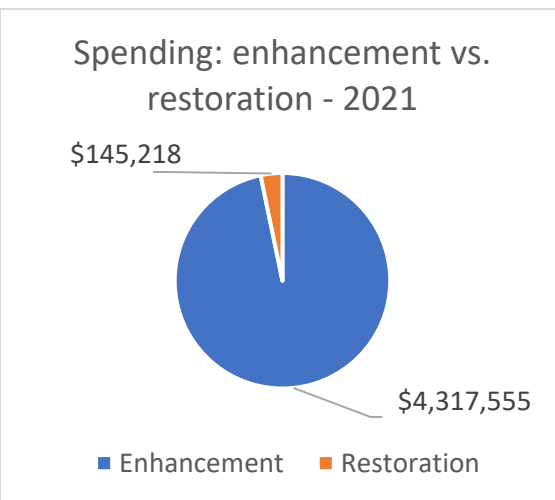
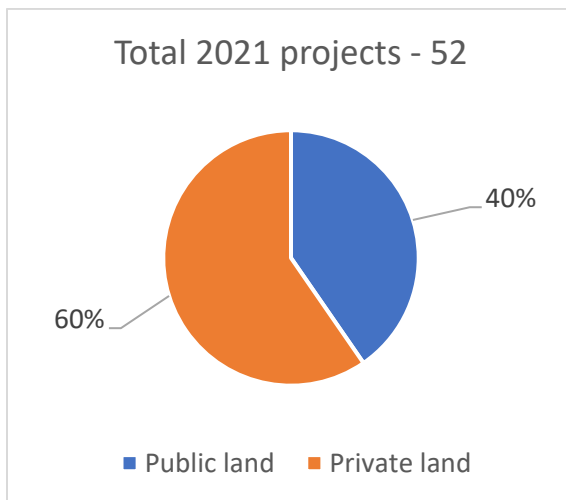
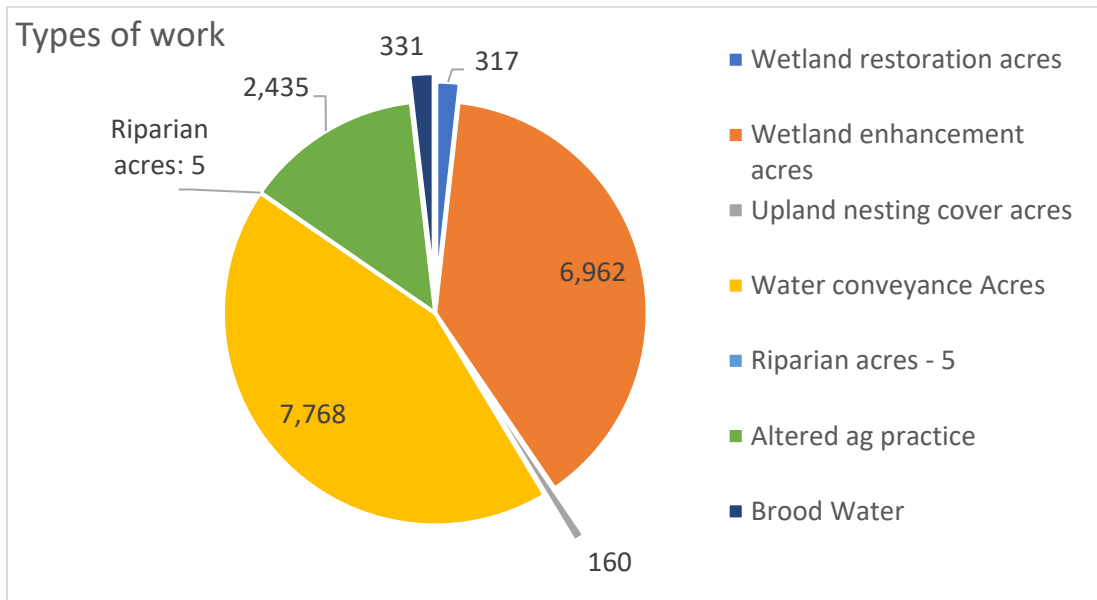
CWA's Veteran Hunt Program has continued to serve veterans during the Covid pandemic, in no small part due to the volunteer Veteran Hunt Coordinators Retired U.S. Army Col. Mike Peeters and USMC Sgt. Mike Kellogg. Although fishing trips were curtailed in 2020 and minimal in 2021, strong offerings in hunting trips continued, thanks to the generous donations of cash and hunts to support the program.



WETLAND PROGRAMS

Our biologists completed work benefitting nearly 17,600 acres in California in 2021, largely focused on enhancing existing wetlands, with a substantial focus on water conveyance systems, which are the linchpin to managed wetland systems in this state. Sixty percent of work was done on private land, using grant funding and landowner matching, while 40% was on public land.

Of particular note was work that changed current agricultural practices, which consisted of two major efforts: In the Delta, we helped convert 650 acres on Staten Island to rice, which is very waterfowl-friendly. And in the Sacramento Valley, we made 1,768 acres of winter wheat and other small grains more friendly to mallards and other locally breeding ducks that nest in those fields by paying [incentives to farmers](#) who agreed to delay their harvest until nesting season was over (July 1-15).

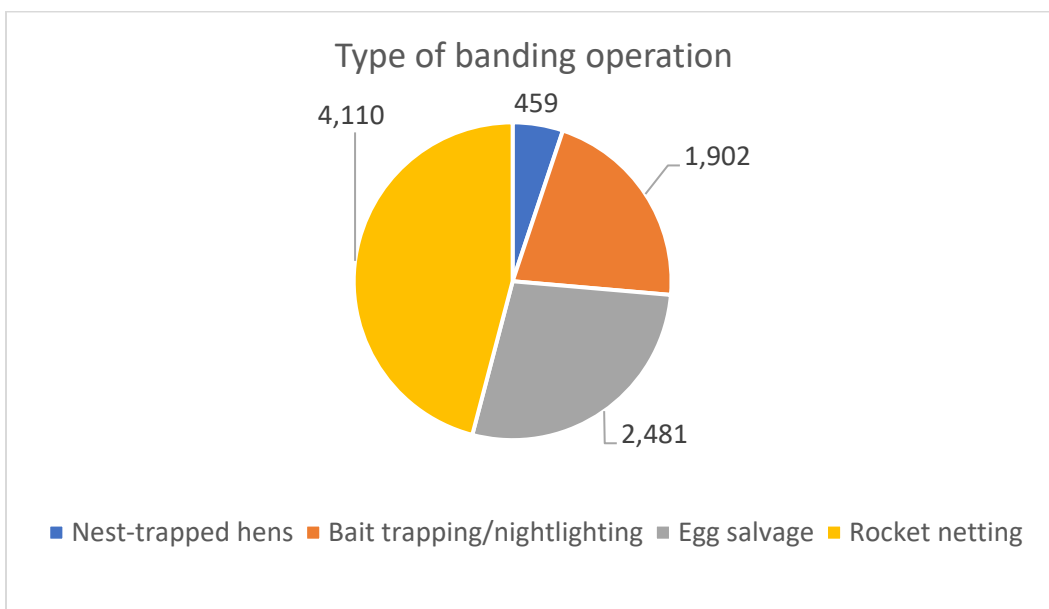
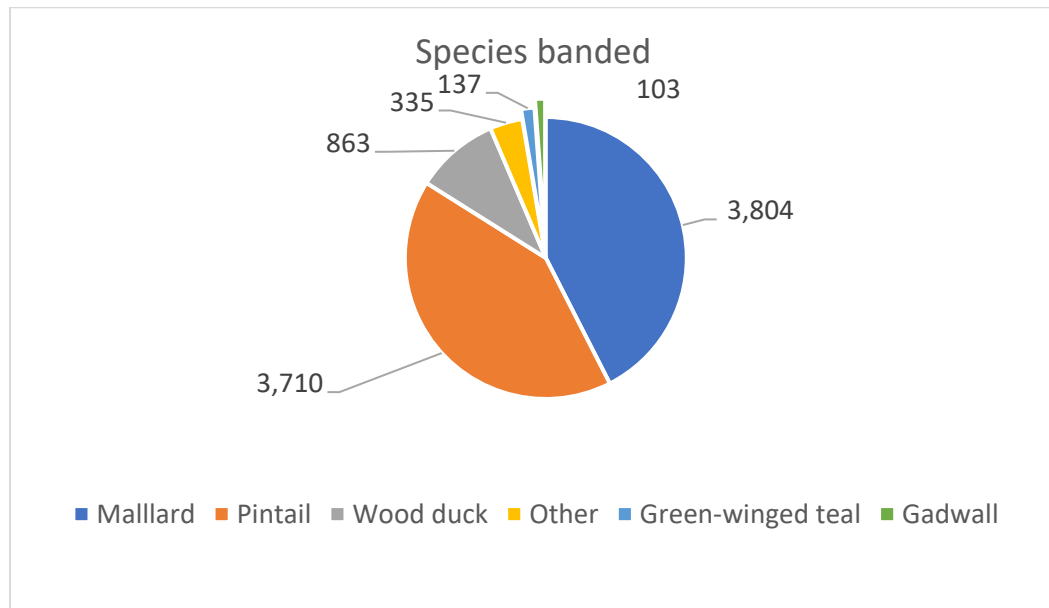


WATERFOWL PROGRAMS

BANDING

Drought, pandemic restrictions and reduced staffing didn't keep our banding crew from besting their 2020 numbers last year: Nearly 9,000 ducks and geese donned CWA bands in 2021, an increase of 7% over the previous year – and these numbers don't include all of the results joint trapping operations with USFWS!

Banding totals in Northeastern California fell by nearly half as two key refuges where we band had very little water, but rocket-netting efforts – which target pintail – yielded a 47% increase, with 3,710 pintail banded.

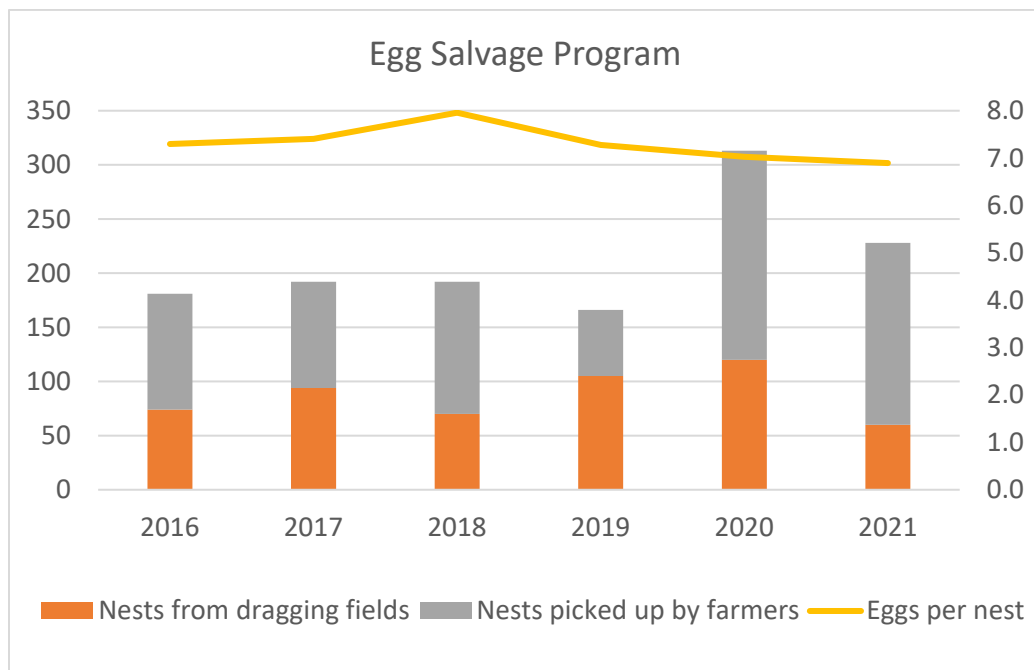


EGG SALVAGE

CWA's Egg Salvage Program staff could clearly see the effects of the drought on ducks nesting in farm fields in 2021. Fewer ducks were found nesting in farm fields, and there were fewer eggs per nest, reducing collections substantially compared with 2020.

The program collects nests two ways: Farmers who need to disc or mow work can call CWA staff to "drag" their fields immediately prior to field work to flush the hens, thereby revealing the location of the nest. Or, farmers can collect nest during harvest when hens flush ahead of harvesters.

Nest collection fell 27% in 2021 compared with 2020. A dry spring often leads to earlier harvests, well before the peak nesting season.



DELAYED WHEAT HARVEST

CWA continued its popular new Delayed Wheat Harvest Incentive Program in 2021, building on the success of its inaugural year. Farmers applied to enroll 18% of all wheat acreage in the Sacramento Valley – an increase over 13% the previous year – and CWA funded enrollment for 1,768 acres, which amounted to 4% of wheat planted in the Sacramento Valley.

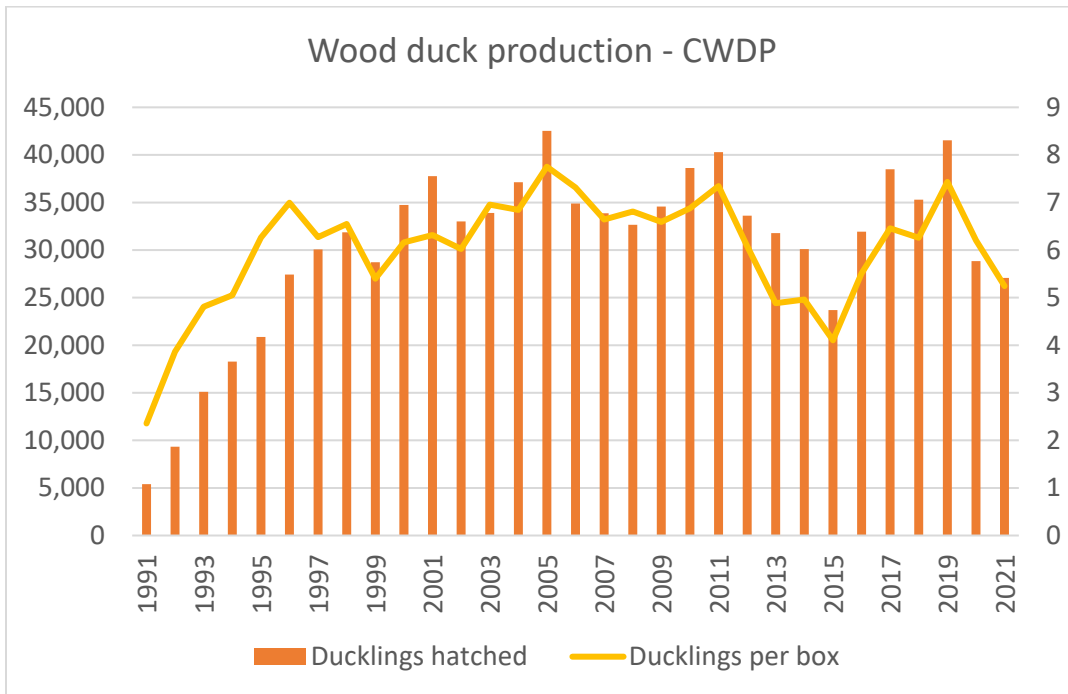
The program targets wheat and other small grain fields that appeal most to nesting mallards and gadwall because they are near water where hens can raise their broods. It pays farmers to delay wheat harvest until July 1-15, which is enough time for most nests to hatch and ducklings to get to that nearby water.

The program has so far been funded by private donations, which will continue in 2022, but it could begin to receive state [funding from the Nesting Bird Habitat Incentive Program](#) in 2023, thanks to CWA’s successful push to fund that program.

WOOD DUCK PROGRAM

CWA’s California Wood Duck Program has hatched 937,968 wood ducks since its inception in 1991. Though drought has diminished production for the past two years, this program is a resounding success in citizen conservation and science, deploying thousands of volunteers over the years to install, monitor and maintain nest boxes for a species that would otherwise depend on depleted riparian habitat.

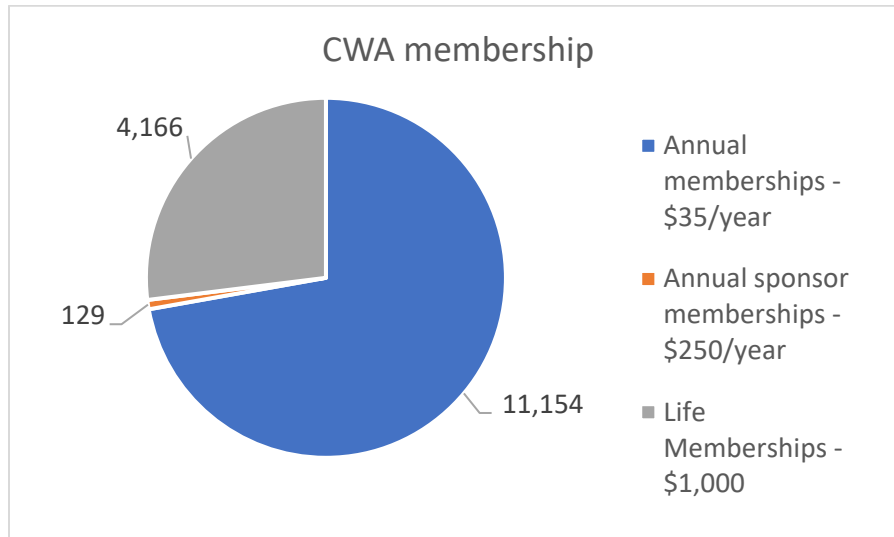
Click [here](#) for the annual California Wood Duck Program Report (printed each year in the Spring issue of California Waterfowl magazine).



WHAT MAKES US TICK

MEMBERSHIP

California Waterfowl's membership fell during the Covid pandemic, in large part due to the fact that a substantial number of members renew by attending their local banquet, and banquets came to a grinding halt. But as banquets resumed, membership began to rise again, and was at 15,450 by the end of 2021.



CWA PROPERTIES

CWA's six wetland properties are an incredible asset to the organization. All are managed to serve the needs of both breeding and wintering waterfowl. And all are used to varying degrees in the Hunt Program. Grizzly Ranch is also used for summer camps co-organized with [Kids Outdoor Sports Camps](#), and for school field trips.

CWA completed substantial work at the Badger Almond unit of its Goose Lake property, including the installation of a new water well, with support from grants from the state Wildlife Conservation Board and California Department of Fish and Wildlife. As a result, CWA was finally able to offer duck hunts on Badger Almond during the 2021-22 season. The pumping was expensive, but the bird use of the property was substantial and gratifying. Additional investments in solar will help to reduce pumping costs going forward, which will allow CWA to flood more acres in the coming years. Look for additional hunt program improvements during the 2022-23 waterfowl hunting season, including new blinds, gravel walking paths and parking lots.

FUNDRAISING

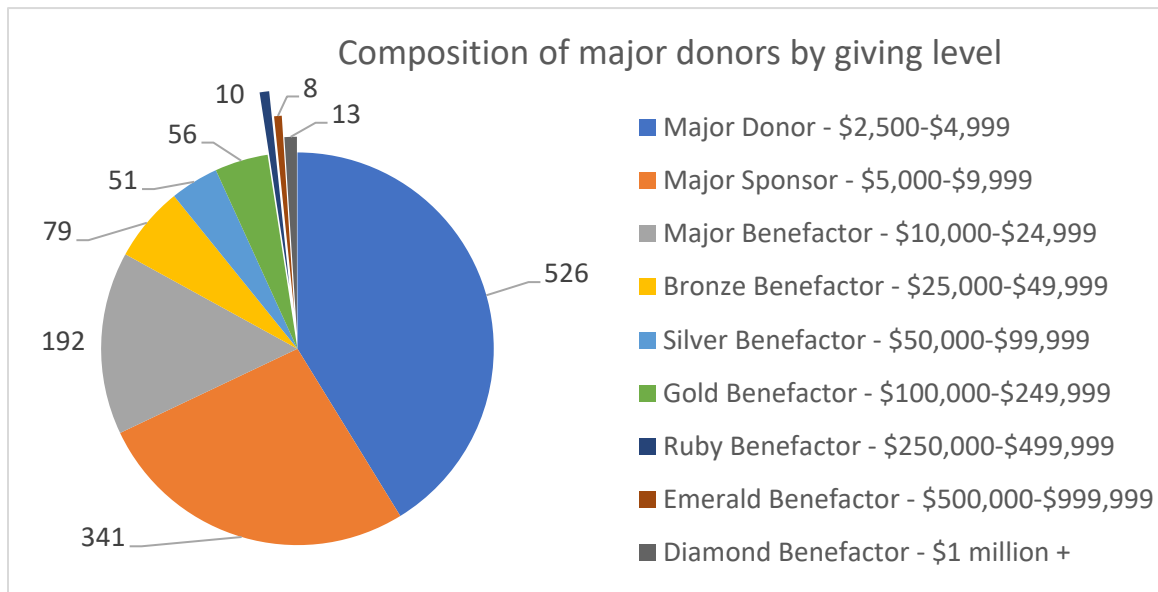
EVENTS

CWA banquets held in all regions of the state are an important part of both the social fabric of the organization and its financial backbone. So when the Covid pandemic ended in-person social gatherings in March 2020, CWA and its supporters experienced twofold loss.

But in-person banquets resumed in the second half of 2021. CWA held 50 events in 2021, and with assistance from online auctions and virtual events, we netted \$1.8 million to support our mission while providing event attendees memorable experiences.

MAJOR DONOR PROGRAM

Nearly 1,300 CWA supporters have risen to the level of Major Donor. This high level of philanthropic commitment to the organization's [mission and vision](#) is crucial to the organization's well-being, in no small part because these generous individuals give and ask for nothing in return, except the satisfaction of contributing to the greater good.



PINTAIL LEGACY SOCIETY

Forty-four CWA supporters have joined our Pintail Legacy Society by designating the organization a recipient of a future gift in their estate plans. While planned giving might sound like the domain of the ultra-wealthy, it is in fact an opportunity for all supporters to give what they can afford, when they can afford it, such as including the gift of a car or boat, or a portion of a 401k, in one's will.

FINANCES

HIGH RATINGS

CWA consistently earns [three- or four-star ratings](#) from Charity Navigator, but 2021 brought another hard-earned accolade: national recognition as an Accredited Land Trust. Accreditation assures supporters and other funders that our lands will be protected in perpetuity and managed to the highest standards. Accreditation is often a prerequisite for receiving some types of grant funds and holding conservation easements.

TRANSPARENCY

CWA meets high standards of transparency regarding its finance. Its tax returns and audited financial reports can be found online [here](#).

CURRENT FINANCES

The latest [audited financial report](#) reflects the worst of Covid times, when pandemic restrictions brought in-person fundraising events to a halt: April 1, 2020, through March 31, 2021. Spending totaled \$10.9 million, 9% less than the previous year. Donors rallied to support the organization, but layoffs and temporary pay cuts were still required for the organization to stay in the black.

In Fiscal Year 2021-22, however, in-person events resumed, and CWA's budget began emerging from the drastic slump. The organization is still recovering now, but normalcy is coming closer.

