

Annual Report

California Ricelands Waterbird Foundation



Building Enduring Partnerships

September 1, 2022 through August 31, 2023



Chairman's Message



Dear Foundation Supporters,

This fiscal year saw us climb out of the epic drought where we forged many new partnerships, especially with the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), to enhance habitat during those tough times. It was very refreshing to see us get back to something that looked a little more normal. However, the new partnerships were a great opportunity to show what our Foundation programs can deliver in terms of habitat enhancement.

Luckily, DWR chose to continue to invest the funds in ricelands habitat projects even after the water returned. We really appreciate the continued partnership and are hoping their interest will continue so we can be more resilient to drought the next time it comes around. However, some challenging fiscal times loom large for the State of California, so we don't really know how likely it is that this funding will continue.

In this annual report you'll read about the significant wildlife habitat projects the Foundation has helped to deploy using our Bid4Birds platform. We continue to use it to fund and valuable projects, not just for waterbird conservation, but for salmon rearing habitat as well. It's exciting to see how far we've come since we started a relatively short time ago.

Regardless of funding other organizations infuse into our programs, it is always our dedicated annual donors that help keep our habitat projects rolling year after year. Thank you all for your continued commitment and support.

Thank you for all your help!

Paul Buttner
Chairman

Annual Report

California Ricelands Waterbird Foundation

The California Ricelands Waterbird Foundation (“Foundation”) was created in 2015 to help implement activities that create and promote habitat projects on the ground in and around California ricelands. Over the past seven years, we have used our donor funding as leverage to help California Rice acquire large federal grants from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The active rice industry grants during this fiscal year include the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) awarded in 2020 and a Conservation Innovation Grant awarded in 2019. Beginning in 2021, we added the State of California to this list of agencies interested in using our programs to deploy state funds in viable habitat projects.

The Foundation’s partners help make this work successful, and we greatly appreciate their financial and technical service contributions. We work closely with staff from the California Rice Commission, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Point Blue Conservation Science, and Audubon California to make our shorebird habitat programs successful. The Foundation used its web-based conservation program delivery tools to support multiple projects funded through grant agreements with the California Rice Commission (CRC). As our work with the State of California expanded our work to wetlands, we also worked closely with staff from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), California Waterfowl Association, Ducks Unlimited, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Partners Program.

Major Activities

This fiscal year included the following major activities:

- 1) Helped to direct NRCS funds and donor funds into high-quality shorebird habitat projects
- 2) Prioritized and selected winter-season habitat projects on rice and wetlands during continuing drought as part of major grants from the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) and CDFW
- 3) Hosted CalTrout’s Fish Food Program on our website, helping young salmon in the Sacramento Valley
- 4) Implemented a pilot project to test a new method of planting cover crops for nesting habitat

High-quality Shorebird Habitat: A Key Component of our Annual Habitat Work

This fiscal year was the fourth year our Foundation has been running its own habitat program through our web-based platform we call Bid4Birds. The Bid4Birds program turns farmers' fields into temporary habitat for shorebirds and other waterbirds during times of year when habitat is limited on the landscape, during what we call 'shoulder seasons'. Creating this habitat has real costs for the farmers. The Foundation uses Bid4Birds to provide incentive payments to help offset those costs for farmers.

In 2022-23, we focused our efforts on habitat in the Fall migration season and created over 1,000 acres of valuable shoulder season habitat from August through September 2022. This was funded entirely by contributions from our generous donors. During site visits, we observed 22 species of waterbirds using enrolled fields. The following Spring of 2023 we enrolled approximately 1,700 acres into should season habitat project that were funded by DWR as part of a grant with CRC.



Black-necked Stilt walking through a rice field.

Continuing Winter-season Drought Habitat Projects

DWR continued investments into this third year of historic drought. In the fall of 2022, the outlook for waterbird habitat was looking grim as the drought was peaking and little rice was grown on the west side of the Sacramento Valley. We enrolled about 70,000 acres of winter-flooded rice and wetland habitat projects, most of which were in place by November. DWR funding was used to facilitate the use of groundwater to flood these ricelands and private wetlands. Once January



Pair of Tundra Swans taking flight from a rice field.

2023 rolled around, we saw the first significant rainfall in years. The critical early habitat created by this program, plus the addition of natural precipitation events later in season really helped the Sacramento Valley to meet its wetland habitat objectives that winter season.

Assisting Partners Working on Salmon “Fish Food” Program

We used our Bid4Birds web-based platform to help salmon populations this last fiscal year by partnering with California Trout (CalTrout) and Reclamation District 108 (RD108) to help with the first large-scale rollout of their Fish Food Program. As part of their new project funded by Prop 68 and the Bureau of Reclamation, RD108 looked to our Bid4Birds platform to help share practice specifications and host the application process for landowners. This practice strategically floods fields in order to grow highly nutritious “fish food” using the carbon sources in winter-flooded rice fields, and then subsequently drains this food back to the rivers through coordinated drain releases. The partners were successful in enrolling nearly 30,000 acres into the Fish Food Program this fiscal year.



Zooplankton net used to measure amounts of fish food field in winter flooded rice fields.

New Approaches to Nesting Habitat

The Foundation is always looking for opportunities where we can test innovative ideas on habitat creation. This year we piloted a new way to establish cover crops in idle rice fields for the purpose of providing nesting habitat for upland nesting waterbirds. Normally, a cover crop would be planted in the fall after rice harvest and then grow over the course of the winter, thus the field could not be winter-flooded. However, it may be possible to establish the cover crop *after* a field was winter-flooded if the grower is planning to idle the acres the following season. Under this scenario, the field could be flooded habitat in the winter, and then provide nesting habitat in the spring and summer. Our producer partners would fly-on the cover crop seed into a winter-flooded field in February. The seeds then quickly germinate and take advantage of the leftover moisture from winter flooding and be ready to provide quality nesting cover by late-spring.

In spring of 2023, the Foundation funded our first test of this practice on 281 acres in Butte and Yolo counties. After a successful seeding process and two weeks of very encouraging plant growth, there was an unusually heavy period of rainfall that resulted in flooding throughout the Sacramento Valley and also severely damaged the cover crops. The early results from this trial were so encouraging, we plan to try again the following season.

Scenes from the Foundation's Habitat Partnership Projects



CALIFORNIA RICELANDS WATERBIRD FOUNDATION

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2022/23

Mark Biddlecomb, Director

Paul Buttner, Chairman/Executive Director

Mike DeWit, Director

Meghan Hertel, Director

Josh Sheppard, Secretary/Treasurer



California Ricelands Waterbird Foundation Supporters

Fiscal Year 2022/23
September 1, 2022 – August 31, 2023

Stakeholders (\$50,000+)
California Rice Commission

Patrons (\$10,000+)
Anonymous

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Montna Farms
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The Eddie Williamson Family Foundation
The Keith Campbell Foundation
The Strong Foundation

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Sun Valley Rice Company

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Butte County Rice Growers Association
Butte Sink Rice Ranch
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Builders (\$250+)
Kim DeVincenzi
Henley Family LP
Lucky Seven Land Co
Jason & Amy Rogers
Sawtelle Sake
Lucky Seven Land Company

*Donations received/utilized during the months of September 1, 2022 – August 31, 2023

Summary of the Foundation's Financial Statement

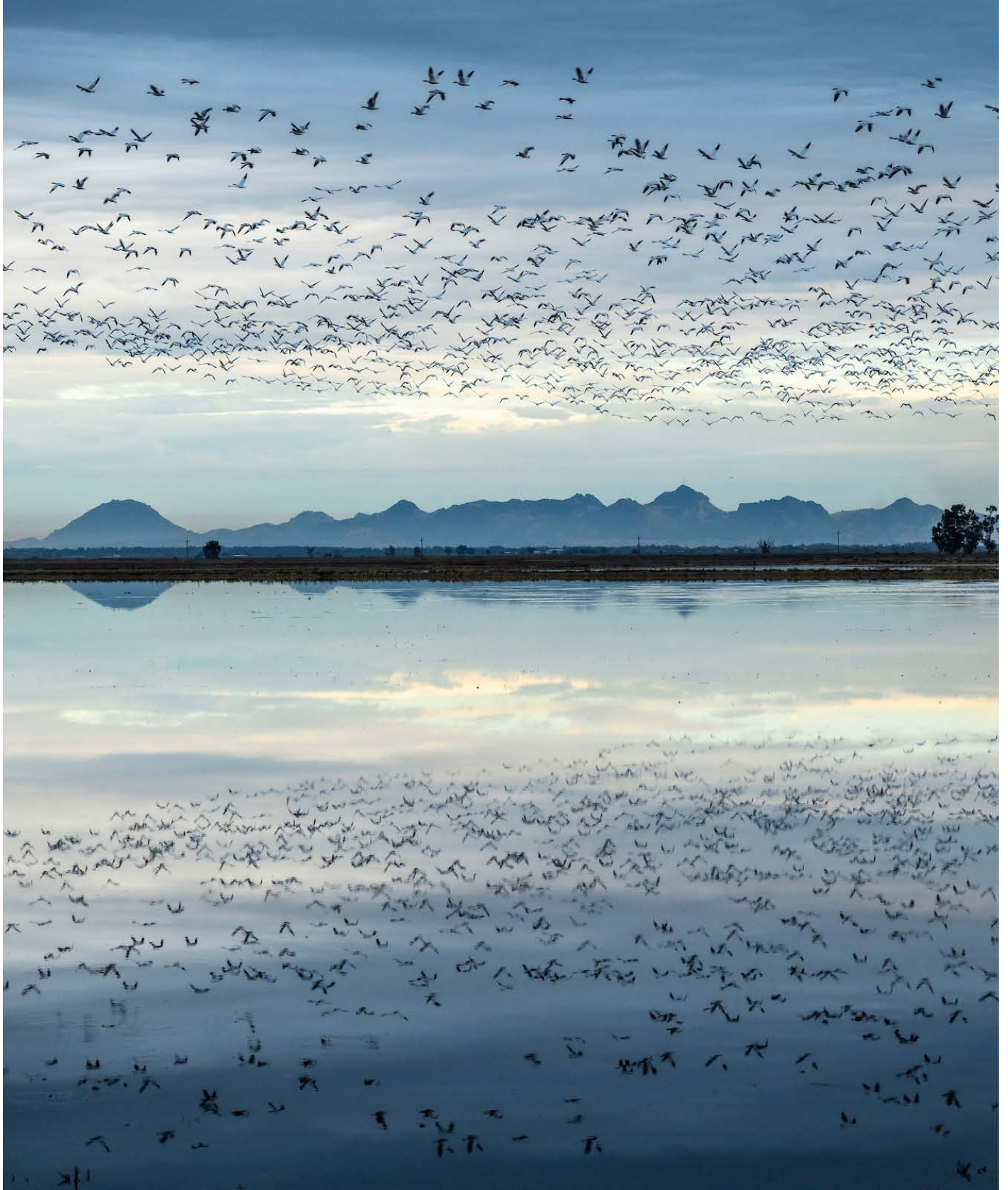
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

AUGUST 31, 2023 AND 2022

	2023	2022
<u>ASSETS</u>		
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	278,521	197,591
Total Assets	278,521	197,591
 Current Liabilities		
Accounts payable	50	50
Total Liabilities		
 Net Assets		
Donor Restricted	0	0
Unrestricted	278,521	197,541
Total Net Assets	278,521	197,541

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEARS ENDED AUGUST 31, 2023 AND 2022

	2023	2022
<u>SUPPORT AND REVENUE</u>		
Contributions	229,262	347,161
Pledges	21,250	21,250
In-Kind Contributions	8,926	24,243
Total Support and Revenue	259,438	392,654
 <u>EXPENSES</u>		
Program expense	121,503	225,757
Management and general	40,208	57,155
Fundraising	16,797	20,945
Total Expenses	178,508	303,857
 Changes in Net Assets		
	80,930	88,797
Net Assets - Beginning of year	197,541	108,744
Net Assets - Ending of year	278,471	197,541





California Ricelands Waterbird Foundation
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*Enhancing the ecological value of California rice fields to help
sustain the millions of waterbirds and other wildlife in the
Pacific Flyway for future generations*

CalRiceWaterbirds.org

California Ricelands Waterbird Foundation is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization.
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