

# **Annual Report**

## **California Ricelands Waterbird Foundation**



### **Leveraging Partnerships for Drought Resiliency**

*September 1, 2021 through August 31, 2022*



## Chairman's Message

Dear Foundation Supporters,

In our previous annual report, I described a growing trend that our Foundation and its Bid4Birds conservation programs delivery system was starting to be used by others—especially the State of California's Department of Water Resources—to deploy significant resources to ricelands and wetlands in a strategic effort to mitigate the exceptional impacts of drought on our Pacific Flyway wildlife. That has proven to be just the beginning of a multi-year wave of opportunity for us to share our Bid4Birds toolbox with partners to help them allocate their funding into coordinated habitat projects with the goal of achieving drought resiliency for wildlife.

This trend caused me to think of *Leveraging Partnerships for Drought Resiliency* as the theme of this year's annual report. The amount of habitat funding driven through our web-based Bid4Birds platform was significant during this past fiscal year, enabling us to build our reserves as we focused on helping other organizations invest drought relief funding into meaningful habitat projects. This demonstrates just how much our Foundation has evolved in terms of the development of our Bid4Birds program and related technical tools we've developed to deliver cost-effective habitat projects in a nimble and flexible manner. It is your sustained and ongoing contributions that prepared us for this role. We are still a young organization—just six years into this—and we've already been able to leverage our members' donations to attract significant state and federal investments. Since drought reared its ugly head, our efforts to help guide state drought emergency habitat investments demonstrates our preparedness to help wildlife during these tough times. It has been great to see all this evolve in a relatively short amount of time.

I recognize and thank our dedicated donors for becoming “drought busters” for our wildlife by enabling us to be ready to work on drought resiliency with our partners in a shared interest in helping our wildlife to thrive.

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 implement activities that create and promote real habitat projects on the ground in and around California ricelands. Over the past six years, we have used our donor funding as leverage to acquire large federal grants from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The grants that are currently being implemented include a 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 has used its web-based conservation program delivery tools to support multiple projects that are funded through grant agreements with the California Rice Commission. 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 & Wildlife, 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) Invested our NRCS matching funds and donor funds into high-quality shorebird projects.
- 2) Prioritized and selected habitat projects on rice and wetlands during epic drought as part of a major grant from the California Department of Water Resources.

#### **High-quality Shorebird Habitat: A Cornerstone of Our Habitat Work**

This fiscal year marked our Foundation’s third year at running its own habitat program through our signature habitat delivery system 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 so the Foundation uses Bid4Birds to provide incentive payments to help offset those costs for farmers. By now, this process is a well-oiled machine. We

use our dedicated website ([www.CalriceWaterbirds.org](http://www.CalriceWaterbirds.org)) to communicate program requirements and collect bids from farmers who are interested in participating. Finally, with the help of our partners, we analyze submitted applications, select final projects and set up a system to monitor compliance and bird use of enrolled fields.

In 2021-22, we focused our efforts on habitat in the Fall migration season and created nearly 2,200 acres of valuable shoulder season habitat from August through October 2021.

This was funded mostly by a generous contribution from TNC, in addition to about \$15,000 of our Foundation funds. During site visits, we observed 22 species of waterbirds using enrolled fields. The most abundant species observed were Snow Goose (12,288 birds), Long-billed Dowitcher (1,814 birds), and Greater White-fronted Goose (1,354 birds). We observed 12 species of shorebirds (and counted 5,280 individuals).

The most abundant shorebird, after dowitchers, was Least Sandpiper and Western Sandpiper. We also observed 260 Sandhill Cranes using enrolled fields.

The Foundation is happy to work with conservation minded growers to provide this critical habitat, particularly during years without much winter or spring season precipitation like we experienced in 2020-21.

### Leveraging the Bid4Birds Systems & Structure

Because of our previous work to get Bid4Birds systems and processes in place, we were uniquely poised to expand our work to ameliorate the devastating impacts of severe drought on migratory waterbirds.

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) invested historic funding to address drought effects on birds by granting \$8 million to the California Rice

Commission. This DWR funding was used to facilitate the use of groundwater to flood ricelands and private wetlands in the Sacramento Valley. Pumping



Group of Long-billed Dowitcher using a Bid4Bids project field.



Snowy Egret enjoys a quick shellfish snack.



groundwater incurs much higher costs to landowners than using surface water, so this program was essential to ensuring there was flooded habitat available to migratory waterbirds using the Pacific Flyway in the Central Valley. This DWR-funded work included five separate programs that we helped to deliver:



American Wigeon loafing on a project site.

Cover type	Season	# Landowners	# Acres
Rice	Winter	134	42,221
Wetlands	Winter	67	9,030
Rice	Spring	6	1,116
Wetlands	Spring	16	2,696
Wetlands	Summer	6	484

Administering these programs was quite a feat compared to the size of our previous years' investments. However, with the help of our large group of partners, our Foundation's web-based Bid4Birds process was able to successfully deploy over 55,000 total acres of habitat with payments submitted to landowners, administered by the California Rice Commission, totaling \$5.3 million.

Overall, this was quite a successful year, given the grim water outlook and the speed at which we adapted our program. We worked out data management and workflow processes quickly given the sheer volume of the work to be done in a relatively short window of time. We learned a great deal about how to administer these programs efficiently and nimbly which served us well when it came to doing all these programs again in the following year which will be discussed in next year's annual report.



## Scenes from the Foundation's Habitat Partnership Projects





## Scenes from the Foundation's Habitat Partnership Projects



# **CALIFORNIA RICELANDS WATERBIRD FOUNDATION**

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2021/22**

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 2021/2022\***

### **Stakeholders (\$50,000+)**

The Nature Conservancy  
California Rice Commission

### **Patrons (\$10,000+)**

Mary's Gone Crackers

### **Visionaries (\$5,000+)**

American Commodity Company  
Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund  
Farmers' Rice Cooperative  
Montna Farms  
The Eddie Williamson Family Foundation  
The Keith Campbell Foundation  
The Strong Foundation for Environmental Values

### **Leaders (\$2,500+)**

Paul & Sandra Bonderson  
California Family Foods  
California Commodity Traders  
John Salmonson  
Sun Valley Rice Company  
Jane Taylor

### **Champions (\$1,000+)**

Butte County Rice Growers Association  
Paul Buttner  
DePue Warehouse  
Grow West  
Hans Herkert  
Meta  
Next Generation Foods  
Rominger Rice

### **Advocates (\$500+)**

Cindy Cawell  
Grant Chappell  
G&L Farms  
Moms Farm LLC  
Gorrill Ranch

### **Builders (\$250+)**

Kim DeVincenzi  
Julie Dunn  
Earl Farnsworth  
Bob Giusti  
Henley Family LP  
Meghan Hertel  
Jonathan Koen  
Lucky Seven Land Company

Scott & Celia Manley  
Robin Myers  
Valerie Phillips  
Jason & Amy Rogers  
Frank Salas  
Sawtelle Sake  
David Zezulak

\*Donations received/utilized during the months of September 1, 2021 – August 31, 2022

## Summary of the Foundation's Financial Statement

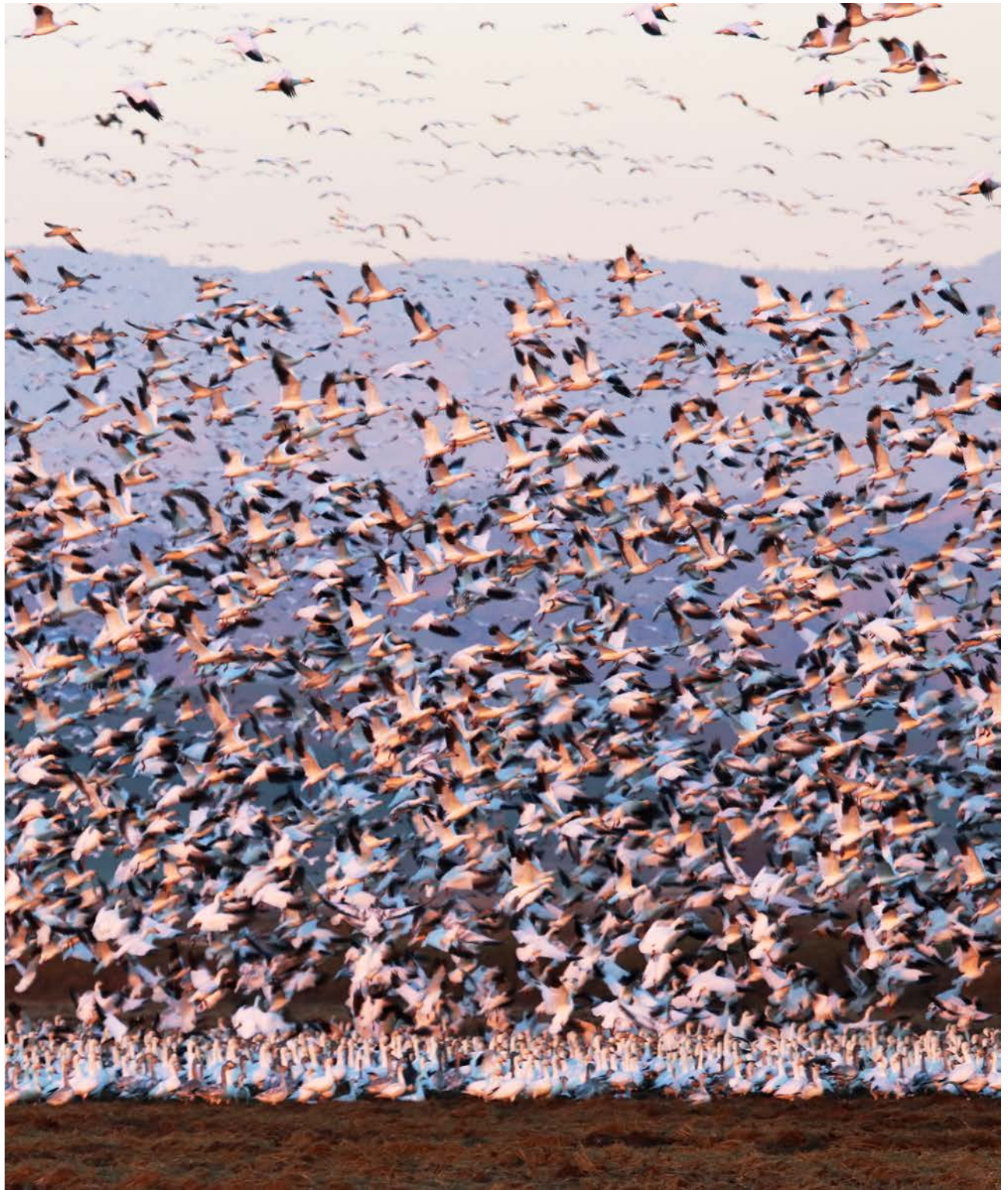
### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

AUGUST 31, 2022 AND 2021

	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>
<b><u>ASSETS</u></b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	197,591	108,794
<b>Total Assets</b>	<u>197,591</u>	<u>108,794</u>
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Accounts payable	50	50
<b>Total Liabilities</b>		
<b>Net Assets</b>		
Donor Restricted	0	15,000
Unrestricted	197,541	93,744
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<u>197,591</u>	<u>108,794</u>

### STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEARS ENDED AUGUST 31, 2022 AND 2021

	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>
<b><u>SUPPORT AND REVENUE</u></b>		
Contributions	347,161	337,129
Pledges	21,250	18,000
In-Kind Contributions	24,243	18,004
<b>Total Support and Revenue</b>	<u>392,654</u>	<u>373,133</u>
<b><u>EXPENSES</u></b>		
Program expense	225,757	244,729
Management and general	57,155	44,055
Fundraising	20,945	17,467
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<u>303,857</u>	<u>306,251</u>
<b>Changes in Net Assets</b>	<u>88,797</u>	<u>66,882</u>
<b>Net Assets - Beginning of year</b>	<u>108,744</u>	<u>41,862</u>
<b>Net Assets - Ending of year</b>	<u>197,541</u>	<u>108,744.</u>







California Ricelands Waterbird Foundation  
1231 I Street, Suite 205  
Sacramento, California 95814  
(916) 387-2264

*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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