

Annual Report
California Ricelands Waterbird Foundation



Diverse Partnerships Helping Waterbirds
September 1, 2024 through August 31, 2025



Chairman's Message



Dear Foundation Supporters,

As we race towards ten years of operations as a wildlife conservation organization helping waterbirds and other wildlife in our beautiful Sacramento Valley, I am pleased to see how far we've come in a relatively short amount of time. We now have a long list of dedicated annual donors who help us to consistently fund valuable habitat projects on the ground to help our wildlife to thrive. We are also joined by a steady stream of conservation partners that we collaborate with for technical expertise and additional funding to further extend our positive impact on habitat.

I'm very happy to report that we directly implemented or assisted with implementation of habitat projects involving over 14,000 acres of ricelands. This report will explore our many projects we executed this year to enhance flooded habitats for shorebirds, waterfowl and many other bird species that call the Sacramento Valley home.

Your critical donations were leveraged by several new foundation grants, including Bass Pro and Cabela's Outdoor Fund, Kelly Foundation, and The William H. & Mattie Wattis Harris Foundation, which together enabled us to have an even greater impact. We welcome them into our family of donors that help us to keep doing what we do.

We greatly appreciate the ongoing dedication of our annual donors who keep our habitat projects moving along year after year. Thank you all for your continued commitment and support.

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 nine years, we have used our donor funding as leverage to help California Rice acquire significant federal grants from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The active rice industry grants during this fiscal year include the NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) which was awarded in 2020 and then renewed in 2025. The State of California also continued contributions and is 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 (CRC), 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 CRC. In our work on nesting waterfowl habitat in ricelands, we work closely with staff from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and California Waterfowl Association (CWA).



Black-necked Stilt trying to intimidate the photographer because it’s young are likely hidden nearby in a rice field.

Major Activities

This fiscal year included the following continuing activities:

- 1) Invested donor funds into high-quality shorebird habitat projects and helped to direct additional State funds from the Department of Water Resources (DWR) into these projects as well.
- 2) Implemented a continuing pilot project to test a new method of planting cover crops for waterfowl upland nesting habitat.
- 3) Prioritized and selected winter-flooding habitat projects on ricelands as part of a program funded by the CDFW.

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



Our partners at Point Blue Conservation Science studying invertebrate communities (aka shorebird food) created by our Bid4Birds program.

This fiscal year was the sixth year the Foundation has been running its own habitat program through our web-based platform called 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'. This habitat is critical to supporting Pacific Flyway waterbird populations. Creating this habitat has real costs for the farmers and the Foundation uses Bid4Birds to provide incentive payments to help offset those costs for farmers.

In fiscal year 2024-25, we supported both a Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 program. In both seasons, the Foundation supported the programs by hosting them on our Bid4Birds web platform to process bids and implement our analytic process for prioritizing projects. **The Fall program created over 2,800 acres of valuable habitat from July through October 2024.** This effort was funded by significant contributions from DWR and CDFW. The CDFW funds came to us through a unique partnership agreement involving The Nature Conservancy. **The Spring 2025 program also created over 2,800 acres of valuable habitat from February to April.** This effort was funded by significant contributions from DWR, as well as funding from our individual donor funds



A pair of Yellowlegs darting over a project field.

Testing New Approaches to Nesting Habitat

In fiscal year 2024-25, we continued our work piloting a new way of establishing cover crops for the purpose of providing nesting habitat for upland nesting waterbirds. Normally, a cover crop is planted in the fall after rice harvest and then grows over the course of the winter, thus the field could not be winter-flooded. Based on our previous year's testing, we believe it is possible to establish the cover crop after winter-flooded rice fields have begun drawing down in late-winter if the grower is planning to idle the acres the following season. These kinds of innovative approaches warrant further study because our future will likely include a greater frequency of planned idling. This creates an opportunity to provide much needed upland nesting habitat for locally breeding waterfowl and to engage interested farmers who would benefit from other revenue streams when idling.

This fiscal year, we again worked with one of our producer partners to fly-on the cover crop seed into winter-flooded fields in Butte County in February 2025. Results were mixed with one field being more affected by spring rains and having patchy clumps of good nesting habitat and the other field ending up offering robust nesting habitat. Both fields saw use by nesting waterfowl and our partners at CWA and CDFW were very excited about the results of this practice. Despite the mixed results, the project still provided valuable information to help us improve for future years.

Enhancing our Winter-flooded Rice Acres

California Winter Rice Habitat Incentive Program—State funding investments into core winter flooding of ricelands continued this fiscal year with \$250,000 of state funds deployed to projects using our Foundation website and implementation resources provided by CRC to administer the Program. Through this CRC-managed rollout, we are also able to offer an enhanced cost-share on the west side of the Valley where prohibitive water costs have been limiting winter-flooded rice acreage. Using this flexibility, we were able to bring back a significant amount of those west-side acres into the winter-flooded habitat mix this year. Over 8,500 acres of winter-flooded rice were successfully enrolled into winter flooding contracts.



Greater White-fronted Geese using a winter-flooded field.

Scenes from the Foundation's 2025 Donor Field Trip



CALIFORNIA RICELANDS WATERBIRD FOUNDATION

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2024/25

Mark Biddlecomb, Director

Paul Buttner, Chairman / Executive Director

Mike DeWit, Director

Xerónimo Castañeda, Director

Josh Sheppard, Secretary / Treasurer



California Ricelands Waterbird Foundation Supporters

Fiscal Year 2024/25

September 1, 2024 – August 31, 2025

Patrons (\$10,000+)

Bass Pro and Cabela's Outdoor Fund
California Rice Commission
Harris Foundation
Kelly Foundation

Visionaries (\$5,000+)

American Commodity Company
Farmers' Rice Cooperative
Mary's Gone Crackers
Montna Farms
Saddleback Ranch/Ned & Carol Spieker
The Eddie Williamson Family Foundation

Leaders (\$2,500+)

California Family Foods
Grow West
Sun Valley Rice Company
Paul & Sandra Bonderson

Champions (\$1,000+)

Jack & Audra Baber
Flyway Farms
Green Valley Enterprises
Jason & Amy Rogers Fund
Rominger Rice
Nicole Van Vleck

Advocates (\$500+)

Blue Gum Ranch	JAKS Farming
Paul Buttner	Scott Manley
Sharon Clevesy	Max Pinkston
Dick and Lisa Cohen	R Gorrill Ranch Enterprise
David Day	John Salmonson

Fave Properties, Inc.

Builders (\$250+)

Candi Depauw
Julie Doty
Linda Elliott
Lori Gustafason
Elizabeth Mayer
Victoria Townsend
Paul West

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

AUGUST 31, 2025 AND 2024

	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>
<u>ASSETS</u>		
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	364,444	323,506
Total Assets	364,444	323,506
Current Liabilities		
Accounts payable	39,400	50
Total Liabilities		
Net Assets		
Donor Restricted	0	0
Unrestricted	325,044	323,456
Total Net Assets & Liabilities	364,444	323,506

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEARS ENDED AUGUST 31, 2025 AND 2024

	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>
<u>SUPPORT AND REVENUE</u>		
Contributions	203,192	131,745
Pledges	21,250	21,250
Investment Income	7,613	
Total Support and Revenue	232,305	152,995
<u>EXPENSES</u>		
Program expense	100,950	30,788
Management and general	38,126	31,307
Fundraising	91,641	45,915
Total Expenses	230,717	108,010
Changes in Net Assets	1,588	44,985
Net Assets - Beginning of year	323,456	278,471
Net Assets - Ending of year	325,044	323,456





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.
Tax ID Number 47-2409361

