



# Wetlands Park *News & Views*

## *Update on Wetlands Park Projects*

*By Elsie Sellers, Wetlands Park Project Manager*

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### **Information?**

Call Wetlands Park  
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Friends of the  
Desert Wetlands Park

The mission of the FDWP is to cooperate with public and private entities to increase public awareness and contribute to the quality of life in the Las Vegas valley by: Supporting the Desert Wetlands Park; Preserving and enhancing the wetlands environs, and Promoting stewardship of the

### **Nature Preserve Expansion Phase II**

Expected completion March 2008:  
This project expands the amenities in the Nature Preserve by adding trails that link to existing trails already in the Nature Preserve and a waterless restroom. Three more ponds, connected by streams, will be constructed. The area will also house a maintenance facility and yard behind a cinder block wall surrounded by plantings.

### **Lemonade Park**

Expected completion March 2008:  
A small neighborhood park, accessed from Hollywood Lane off of Wetlands Park Lane, is under construction within the Nature Preserve Expansion Phase II project area. The Park will have a small parking area, two picnic tables, and a play area for children that has wetlands-themed climbing animals and climbing walls. A shade shelter will have a seating area made of boulders.

### **Nature Center**

Expected completion mid to late 2009:  
The 30,000 sq ft Nature Center will have a 5,000 sq ft interpretive area with interactive exhibits and a sales shop. Visitors will view a program in the auditorium showcasing the Park's plants, wildlife, the Las Vegas Wash with its erosion control structures, scenery and evidence of past occupants dating back perhaps as far as 10,000 years. The center will also house a coffee shop with adjoining visitor

comfort area, two classrooms and offices for staff. The observation deck, 14 feet above the ground, will provide visitors with spectacular view of the Wetlands and surrounding mountain ranges.

### **Duck Creek Trail and Habitat Enhancements**

Expected completion late 2008.  
The existing Duck Creek, Quail Run and Coyote trails accessed from the Duck Creek Trailhead off of Broadbent are at 100% design for enhancements. The trails will be hardened with resin coating and some locations will have boardwalks and bridges. Leashed dogs and bicycles will continue to be welcomed at this trail system. The non-native tamarisk trees will be removed and replaced with native mesquite trees and shrubs that offer more value to wildlife. Portions of the trail system will be closed during construction.

### **Sunrise Trailhead**

Complete  
The 19-acre Sunrise Trailhead has shaded picnic pavilions, vault toilets and a horse lunge pen area. A series of trails identified for hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians accessed from the trailhead are at 90% design and construction is expected to begin late 2007. This is a great place for a picnic while taking in views of the surrounding mountain ranges and the Las Vegas skyline.

## Annual Surveys Conducted to Determine Nesting Status of Endangered Birds

*Adapted from the draft Las Vegas Wash Wildlife Management Plan prepared by Seth Shanahan, Deborah Van Dooremolen, Thomas Sharp, Spencer Martin and Bryan Brown*

### Introduction

Since 1998, annual field surveys have been conducted to determine the breeding occurrence of federally endangered bird species for which the Las Vegas Wash (Wash) might offer potentially suitable nesting habitat. These surveys are performed by permitted wildlife biologists on behalf of the Southern Nevada Water Authority to ensure that the Wash stabilization program does not adversely affect these species. Surveys involve determining presence or absence of the species by broadcasting a recording of its vocalizations at regular intervals in appropriate habitat in order to elicit a response. Surveys also include assessing the state of potentially suitable nesting habitat.

### Southwestern Willow Flycatcher

The southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) is a federally endangered subspecies of the willow flycatcher. This small songbird is gray-brown to dull olive above with whitish wing-bars and has a white throat that contrasts with a dull brown to olive breast band and pale belly. It breeds in dense riparian vegetation

at a limited number of sites throughout the southwest. Since annual breeding season surveys began in 1998, migrant willow flycatchers have been detected during most years (Table 1). However, as these individuals were detected during only one of the total five surveys conducted over the course of the breeding season (and thus were not summer residents) and exhibited no nesting behavior, they could not be confirmed as the endangered subspecies

Year	Willow Fly-catcher	Yuma Clapper Rail	Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo
1998	2	2	1
1999	0	0	0
2000	7	0	0
2001	0	0	0
2002	2	0	0
2003	2	0	0
2004	18	0	0
2005	0	1	0
2006	2	1	0
2007	1	0	0
	34	4	1

Table 1: Detections of willow flycatcher, Yuma clapper rail and western yellow-billed cuckoo along the Wash from 1998 through 2007.

Southwestern willow flycatchers nest in both native and exotic (e.g., salt cedar) dominated riparian vegetation in close proximity to open water or saturated soils. In 1998, native habitats were nearly nonexistent along the Wash, and the salt cedar-dominated habitats were identified as only marginal for nesting southwestern willow flycatchers. Additionally, several of these areas burned between the 2001 and 2002 field seasons, eliminating nearly one-third of the potential nesting habitat. However, in subsequent years, erosion control structures and native riparian restoration efforts along the channel and throughout the park have been increasing the overall extent and quality of potentially suitable native dominated habitat and may eventually attract nesting southwestern willow flycatchers.

### Yuma Clapper Rail

The Yuma clapper rail (*Rallus longirostris yumanensis*) is a federally endangered subspecies of the clapper rail. This relatively large (more than 14 inches long), yet secretive marsh bird (Figure 1) breeds in emergent wetland habitats dominated primarily by cattails and/or bulrush. Two records exist of clapper rail detections in the vicinity of the Wash prior to 1998. In "The Birds of Nevada", published in 1998, J.R. Alcorn states that eight clapper rails were detected in the Las Vegas Sewage disposal ditch (currently known as the City of Las Vegas Water Pollution Control facility discharge channel), which discharges to the Wash approximately one mile upstream of the western boundary of the Wetlands Park, in early September 1959 and another individual was recorded just one week later. The next detections occurred nearly four decades later with two incidental observations of the Yuma clapper rail just upstream of

*(cont. on pg 3)*

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**Annual Surveys Conducted to Determine Nesting Status of Endangered Birds (cont.)**

Pabco Road during the 1998 southwestern willow flycatcher surveys. Despite annual systematic surveys since 2000, only two more clapper rails have been detected along the Wash since 1998 (Table 1). Qualitative observations of habitat conditions over the years indicate that the construction of erosion control structures has continued to increase the quantity of potential Yuma clapper rail habitat within the boundaries of the park.



*Yuma clapper rail*

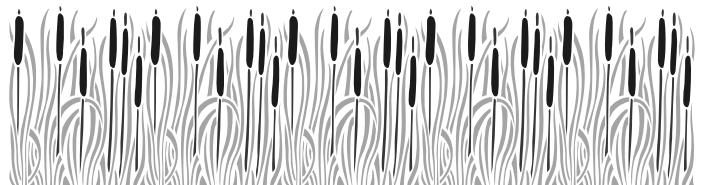
With continued construction of weirs and expected growth of emergent marsh vegetation upstream of these structures, potential Yuma clapper rail nesting habitat should continue to increase in both extent and quality .

**Yellow-Billed Cuckoo**

The western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) is a subspecies of the yellow-billed cuckoo and is a candidate for federal listing. It is a slender bird that is gray-brown above and white below, with a long tail that has alternating black and white bands underneath. In the southwest, it breeds in riparian habitats dominated by cottonwood, willow and mesquite and is generally associated with large patch sizes (i.e., large areas of habitat). Historical information on the status of the yellow-billed cuckoo along the Wash is lacking, but in 1998, an individual was detected near the Nature Preserve. Although annual surveys were conducted for the species from 2000 through 2004, no migrant or resident yellow-billed cuckoos were detected again.



Surveys have been discontinued as potentially suitable nesting habitat along the Wash is currently only of marginal quality. Although cuckoo's are known to use salt cedar in Arizona and New Mexico, the patch size and stature of the salt cedar presently within the Wetlands Park appear insufficient. The Wash may have the potential for developing suitable cuckoo habitat in the future, provided that revegetation efforts for cottonwood, willow and mesquite are successful, but the narrowness of the channel and its active floodplain following decades of erosion may limit possible patch sizes and thus potential nesting habitat.



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## Our Thanks To...

*New and Renewing Members: Peter Kingman, Neil & Karen McDonal, Messinger & Assoc., L.P., Peter Samolis, Gloria Porter, Betty Pardo, Teresa Bell, Mary Madrid, Barbara Hanson, Barbara Skrdla, Mary Campbell, Richard & Carolyn Titus, Bruce & Dorothy Reynolds, Farrell & Deanna Gerland.*

### WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

**The Park is a place to enjoy! Have you visited the Park recently?** The temporary Visitor Center is at the very end of Wetlands Park Lane. Cross Boulder Highway and travel 1 mile east, then look for the Wetlands Park sign, just where Tropicana turns into Broadbent Ave. If it has been a while since you've visited the Park, you will be amazed at the changes and improvements that have taken place. The Park is for your benefit, come and enjoy it!

There are many opportunities to get involved and to show your support-not only through membership in the Friends, but by contributing funds or labor for needed physical improvements, and educational materials. If you have put off renewing, remember your membership ends one year from the date you paid your dues. **PLEASE CHECK THE EXPIRATION DATE ON YOUR MAILING LABEL TO SEE IF IT IS TIME TO RENEW!** If you have not yet taken the plunge to join, please do so now. You will demonstrate that you want to help in the development of new features in the Park for our community!

## ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

The Friends of the Desert Wetlands Park is scheduling its Annual Meeting to be held on **Saturday, September 15, 2007, at 10:00am.**

The meeting will be held at the Winchester Community Center, rooms A and B. The address is 3130 So. McLeod (between Sahara and Desert Inn)

We will elect a new board of trustees and conduct other business as necessary. Hope to see you there.

*New signage along the trails in the Nature Preserve.*



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**Friends of the Desert Wetlands  
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