

# Wild About Wetlands

Nestled amidst an oak woodland along the American River, this award-winning environmental and cultural education center is ideally suited to tell the story of riverside (riparian) forests and other wetlands, and their importance in an ecosystem of which we all are part. Come and get a close-up look at some live wild animals from the area and enjoy this lively, hands-on museum exhibit that is fun and educational for all ages.



## **What Are Wetlands?**

Wetlands are wet, of course! They are found all over the world where low lying lands meet water, or where rivers meet oceans. Wetlands are saturated with water at least part of the year, and are important hosts for a variety of plants and wildlife. In the Central Valley, there are different types of wetlands including marshes, ponds, edges of creeks and rivers, and vernal pools. These areas are some of the most biologically productive environments on the planet, comparable to tropical rain forests.

## **Why Are They Important?**

Wetlands act as giant sponges, slowing and storing rushing floodwater, then releasing it in drier times. Like huge filters, wetlands clean the water by breaking down or removing pollution. Wetlands are home and supermarket to an amazing variety of animals including millions of migratory birds, some providing a watery nursery for salmon and many other species of fish. Yet wetlands are disappearing from the United States at a rate of a football field-sized area every 10 minutes!

## **Come and discover...**

the fascinating *Wild About Wetlands* exhibit and see what dedicated people are doing to conserve and restore them. Let the 19-foot mural guide you through the history of Central Valley wetlands and discover how wetlands have provided a bounty of food, raw materials, power and transportation for thousands of years up through the present. Explore many fascinating and beneficial wetland plants and animals so small they are seldom seen or noticed by the casual observer.

Get a close-up look at some wetland animals like the elusive California Tiger Salamander, one of many species that is disappearing due to destruction of their habitat. See why wetlands are critical to many threatened and endangered species.

Climb up to the giant Heron's Nest and lounge on a giant egg or compare your "wingspan" to other wetland birds. Play some wetland games Under the Lilypad, an interactive spot for younger visitors. Crawl under the "water" for a fish's eye view of the wetland.

Beautiful dioramas, paintings and photographs illustrate the beauty and importance of wetlands. Interactive features abound throughout the exhibit. Come and see why this exhibit has been called "the best yet" by Nature Center visitors.

