

Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

Ducks Unlimited, Inc. (DU) is a world leader in wetlands conservation. DU got its start in 1937, during the Dust Bowl when North America's drought-plagued waterfowl populations had plunged to unprecedented lows. Determined not to sit idly by as the continent's waterfowl dwindled beyond recovery, a small group of sportsmen joined together to form an organization that became known as Ducks Unlimited. Its original mission was habitat conservation. Thanks to decades of abiding by that single mission, DU is now the world's largest and most effective private waterfowl and wetlands conservation organization. DU is backed by more than one million supporters and has conservation projects throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico, and in key areas of Latin America and the Caribbean. Wherever waterfowl breed, migrate, or winter in North America, DU is there.

Ducks Unlimited mission is to conserve, restore, and manage wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people. Wetlands are nature's most productive ecosystems, providing critical habitat to more than 900 wildlife species and invaluable recreation opportunities for people to enjoy. Wetlands also improve the overall health of our environment by recharging and purifying groundwater, moderating floods, and reducing soil erosion. The United States alone has lost more than half of its original wetlands, and each year continues to lose more than 109,000 acres of the vegetated wetlands most important to wildlife.

California's Central Valley is one of DU's five top priority regions in North America. The Central Valley provides critical wintering habitat for approximately 60% of the waterfowl that winter in the Pacific Flyway. These nearly 5 million swans, geese, and ducks find habitat on federal, state, and private lands throughout the region, but face threats due to continual habitat loss and habitat degradation. Additionally, much of the water that provides winter habitat is not secured because water use primarily focuses on human and agricultural uses, with habitat use being a non-priority. Also, the Central Valley has lost an estimated 95% of its original wetlands; bird populations are thus concentrated on much less habitat. DU is actively involved with projects in the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys and the Delta, working on state wildlife areas, national wildlife refuges, and private lands. This work focuses on restoring and enhancing wetland and riparian habitats and surrounding uplands that benefit numerous species of waterfowl, waterbirds, shorebirds, and songbirds.

In the Sacramento Valley, typical projects include an on-going effort at the 9,000 acre Gray Lodge Wildlife Area (WA) to rehabilitate the WA's antiquated water conveyance system so that water delivery and use are much more efficient; the project benefits upwards of 750,000 waterfowl that annually winter at the site. Other on-going work is occurring at the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) complex, where DU is assisting NWR staff with improvement of over 14,000 acres of habitat on the six refuges that form the complex; these six sites

support many of the 4 million waterfowl that winter in the Sacramento Valley. DU is also working with conservation-minded farmers and ranchers to protect farmland from urban development, enhance water quality, protect fisheries, and create, restore, and enhance wetlands that support waterfowl and other bird species.

In the San Joaquin Valley (SJV), DU has on-going projects on public and private lands in the Grasslands Ecological Area and the Tulare Basin. The "Grasslands" is the largest remaining contiguous block of wetlands in California, a 175,000-acre expanse of interconnected public and private wetlands. The Tulare Basin occupies a vast area at the southern end of the SJV, including lands where the former 500,000+ acre Tulare Lake and other swamplands existed. Even with the high degree of wetland losses in the region, remaining wetlands support over 1 million waterfowl during the winter. Current projects on this landscape include work at a number of state Wildlife Areas including Los Banos, Mendota, the Salt Slough Unit of the North Grasslands, and Volta; at San Joaquin River and Kern NWRs; and at a number of private properties. The projects are benefiting wetland, riparian, and associated upland habitats, and the varied wildlife that utilize them.

In the Delta, DU is restoring and enhancing wetland, riparian, and upland habitats at the Cosumnes River Preserve, Stone Lakes NWR, Yolo Bypass and Grizzly Island wildlife areas, and a number of private properties. As with other projects in the Central Valley, these projects benefit incredible numbers of waterfowl, especially during the winter; also, a great diversity of waterbirds, shorebirds, and songbirds are supported by these habitats at some point during their annual cycles.

**For more information on Ducks Unlimited, please contact
our Western Regional Office at (916) 852-2000, or at www.ducks.org.**

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