

*Please share with
your teachers!*

Dear School Administrator:

2023 will mark the 20th year that Friends of the Arcata Marsh (FOAM) and Redwood Region Audubon Society (RRAS) have cosponsored a bird art contest for Humboldt County students in grades K through 12! This is done in conjunction with the Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival held in Arcata in mid-April.

In 2023, after three years impacted by COVID, Godwit Days is excited to be returning to an in-person festival at the Arcata Community Center (ACC) from April 14 to 16. All student bird art contest entries will be displayed in the lobby and halls of the ACC, with copies of the winners shown at the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center (AMIC) during May and June.

Over the years, the number of entries has fluctuated. In Year 1 (2004), there were 143. The peak was 980 in 2016, which then plunged to 160 in 2020 (when schools shut down due to COVID before many classes had started their artwork), finally trending upward to reach 650 in 2022. The cumulative total is an astounding 10,830 pieces of bird art. Many Humboldt County schools have participated at some point, but if yours hasn't, 2023 is a perfect time to start!

I have served as a volunteer coordinating the contest during all 20 years. I have been awed by the talent of our county's children and their creativity using a variety of media – from crayons to watercolors, from pastel chalk to pen and ink, from colored pencils to oil paint, from cross-stitch and felting to scratchboards. Some teachers integrate the bird art creation into their science curriculum, so the kids depict birds in their proper habitat, eating the correct food, or engaging in true behaviors. (We even give "Best Bird in Habitat" awards to recognize this.)

To promote smooth operation of the contest, submission rules (see enclosed flyer) have been honed over time. However, in recent years, problems with following the contest instructions have proliferated. Many of the problems have been with:

- Meeting the entry deadline
- Submitting incomplete or illegible information on the back of each entry (student name, grade, school, teacher, e-mail/phone contact, bird species depicted)
- Exceeding size restrictions
- Sending in artwork that is still wet (sticks together) or neglecting to enclose artwork with glued-on objects (falls off) or created using pastel chalk (smudges) in a plastic sleeve
- Failing to include postage-stamped return envelopes (students who submit individually, rather than as part of a packet from their teacher)
- Not picking up entries after the contest ends (teachers)

I handle processing of all the entries: from sorting them for judging to re-sorting them for return after the festival (and in between those tasks, sending out winner letters, making award certificates, writing prize checks, arranging for art display, etc). In order to be included in this year's contest, please emphasize to your teachers and students that they need to follow the entry instructions in the enclosed flyer. I hope to see work from your school this spring!

Sue Leskiw

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