



# Land of the West Wind

Volume 20 Issue 1

March 2020

## Buffehead and Goldeneye Identification

You may have noticed an increased number of diving ducks in your ponds this winter. In fact, Common Goldeneye were the 5th most common bird shot this year on the Grizzly Island Wildlife Area. It is unclear if there was an increase in diving ducks in the management areas, or if there was simply a lack of the regular dabbling ducks —American Wigeon and Green-winged Teal were down significantly this year from last year.

Goldeneye and Bufflehead have direct flight paths, very quick wing beats, and can be differentiated from teal balls by the flashes of black and white. Goldeneye also can be heard whistling while flying if they are close enough. Bufflehead and Goldeneye can be tricky to tell apart from each other unless you know what to look for. So how do you tell Goldeneye and Bufflehead apart? Here is some advice from expert birders.

### Drake Bufflehead

*Bufflehead is named for its large, rounded head, and the head pattern of the drake is unlike any other duck. Its huge, white auricular patch extends back from the eye, wrapping around the back of its contrasting black head, which has a purple-green sheen. Unlike its relatives, the goldeneyes, it has a dark eye and the bill is blue-grey. It has a black back and rump, with grey tail coverts and tail. Its neck, breast and belly are white and it has pure white scapulars on the wing. It is smaller than the Goldeneyes and also a frequent diver.*

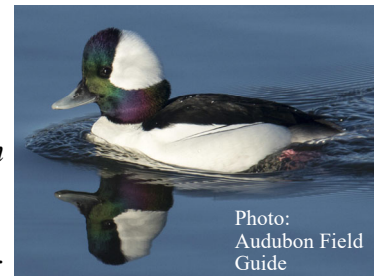


Photo:  
Audubon Field  
Guide

### Female Bufflehead

*As small as a Pied-billed Grebe, this tiny duck is distinctive, with its large dark brown head and oval-shaped white patch below and behind the eye. It may show a small white patch on the closed wing. Its eye is dark, its bill is gray and, if seen, its feet also are gray. Young males look similar to females before they molt into adult plumage.*



Photo Bridget Spencer, Macaulay Library

### Drake Common Goldeneye

*Its most conspicuous defining feature is the white oval on the face, in front of and below the eye. The dark head shines green in good light, but otherwise appears black. The neck, breast, underparts and flanks are white, while the back, primaries, tail and undertail are black. Note the pattern of the scapulars of the inner wing: white with thin black streaks across them. Look at the black bill and imagine a line along the bottom of the bill, and another along the forehead – the two meet at a reasonably sharp angle.*

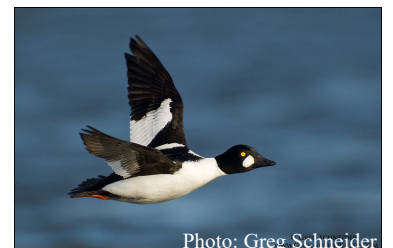


Photo: Greg Schneider

### Female Common Goldeneye

*The rich, chocolate-brown head of female Common Goldeneye has a distinctive 'peaked' shape, almost triangular, and ends abruptly on a white neck. Its underparts are grayish and birds on the water usually show some of the white from their wings and wing coverts, which looks like a broken white line above the flanks. The eye is almost white and the bill is black with a yellow tip, but some birds have all-black bills or pinkish tips and others (probably immatures) occasionally having most of the bill yellowish.*

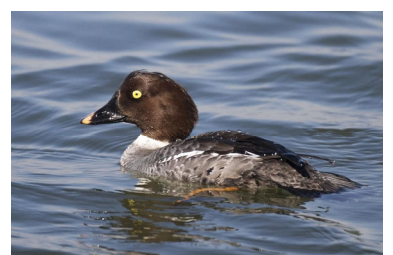


Photo: Blake Matheson, Macaulay Library

## Land of the West Wind

Quarterly newsletter of the Suisun Resource Conservation District  
Address: 2544 Grizzly Island Road  
Suisun, CA 94585  
Telephone: (707) 425-9302  
Fax: (707) 425-4402  
Water Manager office: (707) 426-2431  
E-mail: [srkd@suisunrkd.org](mailto:srkd@suisunrkd.org)  
Website: [www.suisunrkd.org](http://www.suisunrkd.org)

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SRCD's public meetings are held at 2 PM on the second Wednesday of each month at the Solano County Supervisors Chambers  
675 Texas Street  
Fairfield, CA 94533

SRCD represents private landowners of the Suisun Marsh at the Federal, State, and local levels. Its historic goal has been to achieve a water supply of adequate quality so that preferred wetland habitat values will be retained through appropriate management practices. Through cooperation with landowners and various agencies, SRCD seeks to develop new programs aimed at protecting and improving the Suisun Marsh for future generations.

## SRCD UPDATE

*Suisun Resource Conservation District Water Managers*

The **SRCD Portable Pump Program** will be available again this year to aid and enhance marsh habitats. Nine twelve-inch pumps are available for draining operations (leach cycles) on individual ownerships and state-owned lands.

We have had an exceptionally dry winter so far and long-range weather forecasts do not predict any precipitation. Without some rainfall, the salinity conditions in Suisun Marsh will continue to shoot up. If you are thinking about performing leach cycles of your pond, you may need water levels to be down to pond bottoms soon. SRCD is recommending that landowners run irrigations early in the spring to avoid loading the soils with salts for most areas in the marsh. More information on current salinity levels on page 7.

The **Lepidium (Pepperweed) Spray Program** continues this year. If you have problems with this troublesome invasive plant, you may purchase the control chemical *Telar*, a broad-leaf selective herbicide, and widely used to treat *Lepidium*. You may obtain it from SRCD directly or contact SRCD to arrange a certified applicator crew to spray your property. Hiring a spray crew to treat your club costs roughly 200 dollars per acre. Unfortunately, there is no cost share available for the 2020.

If you have *Lepidium* in areas that are difficult to access or treat, SRCD is continuing to test alternative treatments in 2020 including a spray-drone. Contact Operations Manager John Takekawa for more information.

**2020 Preservation Agreement Implementation (PAI) Applications** are now available on the website and from your Water Manager. Upgrading an old water control structure from cast iron to stainless steel or a rusty corrugated metal pipe to High Density Polyethylene (HDPE) can extend their useful life by more than a decade. The PAI fund has a unified application for 2020, so you may apply for all joint-use facility and drainage improvement projects with the same form. Visit the SRCD website and check out the *Programs* tab or contact your Water Manager for more information.

### Individual Management Plan Updates

The SRCD is helping Suisun Marsh landowners update their individual management plans which required for permitting certain habitat management activities. SRCD will be scheduling meetings with club owners to catalog the existing infrastructure and to discuss management issues for each managed wetland. We will be contacting and asking landowners to participate in meetings starting in March 2020.

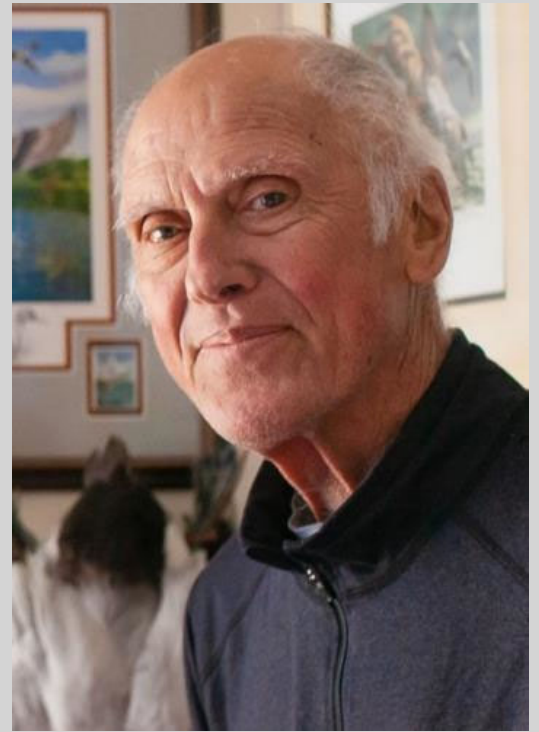


## Richard Radigonda

**May 27, 1938 - January 18, 2020**

On January 18, 2020, Rich Radigonda passed away while surrounded by his family after a very long and courageous battle with Cancer and Myelodysplastic Syndrome (MDS). Rich leaves behind an impressive legacy of selflessness, artistry, and conservation. Rich was born in San Francisco in 1938, where he lived during his early life. He graduated from Riordan High School in 1957, and then served his county in the United States Navy aboard the USS Ticonderoga aircraft carrier. In 1960, Rich married Jean Tretheway Radigonda, and started his own auto repair business (Rich's Auto & Truck), which he operated successfully for 40 years. Rich and Jean lived in the Danville-Walnut Creek area while raising their three children, Gina, Tosca, and Rich Jr. before eventually settling in Vallejo

Many will remember Rich for his duck decoy carving and fantastic paintings of all kinds ranging from race cars and aircraft to wildlife and marsh panoramas. Rich was recognized many times for his paintings and pencil drawings depicting the natural beauty and hunting heritage the Suisun Marsh. His "Flying Pintail" was featured as the 2005 California Duck Stamp, and his murals are displayed on the USS Hornet at Travis Airforce Base. Rich's depiction of decoy carver Richard "Fresh Air Dick" Jansen is featured in the current issue of California Waterfowl.



Radigonda's pencil drawing of Richard "Fresh Air Dick" Jansen carving decoys

Rich was an avid waterfowl hunter and pursued his lifelong passion as a member of numerous Suisun Marsh duck clubs including: Miramonte, Joice Island Mallard Farms, California Farms, and Morrow Island Land Company. His hunting experiences and appreciation for the Suisun Marsh were expressed in his carving of numerous award winning waterfowl decoys and his creation of an extensive collection of art work depicting Suisun Marsh wetlands framed by Mt Diablo, graceful flights of pintails, and lost wooden decoys that escaped the mindful eye of their owners. In 2019, Rich was awarded CWA's Ray Lewis Lifetime Achievement Award. Rich was always willing to donate his art work and time to CWA, DU, SRCD, USS Hornet and others to support the mission of wetland conservation, the preservation of our waterfowl resources and hunting heritage. Rich's support, generosity, and friendship to those in the Marsh will be missed.

Rich impacted and enhanced the lives of so many of his family, friends, and colleagues. He is survived by his sister Diane Warde, his children, Gina Gonzales (Jon), Tosca Feliciello (Angelo), Richard Radigonda, Jr. (Lorinda), and his 5 grandchildren Milan Feliciello, Dante Radigonda, Nicolas Gonzales, Violet Radigonda, and Lily Radigonda.

# 2019-2020 Grizzly Island Wildlife Area Waterfowl Season Summary

By Orlando Rocha, Environmental Scientist for Grizzly Island Wildlife Area

The season has officially come to an end, and it was a tough one for us here on Grizzly Island Wildlife Area (GIWA). This year we saw a real lack in American Wigeon and Green-winged Teal. These birds normally make up the majority of our harvest during late December and January, and our hunters simply did not see them this year.

I have faith that next year will be different. A few factors most likely played into how the season went for us. We duck hunters can always blame warm, bright, sunny days with no wind. Of course, those days don't help, but last year, we had a few major events that had more of an effect than the weather.

**GIWA fire burning in closed zone**  
—Orlando Rocha



In late October, a 2000-acre fire started in the upland fields and quickly burned through the closed zone. The fire quickly jumped Grizzly Island Road (and luckily, it did not enter our shop area) and plenty of damage was done. The fire burned a majority of the water control structures in the closed zone leaving only 3 ponds flooded for the rest of the season. To add insult to injury, the pump that feeds the closed zone literally exploded soon after leaving the adjacent units waterless. The lack of flooded acreage in the middle of the wildlife area definitely had a negative affect on our hunting in 2020, but we are preparing to make sure next season the habitat is better.

Recently, GIWA received a DFW Duck Stamp Grant to repair water control structures and levees for two main water delivery ditches in the closed zone as well as to several of our most popular hunting units. The pump for flooding Pond 12 is in the middle of being rebuilt and replaced and will be installed by the end of summer to be ready for early fall flood. Replacing water control structures is a high priority for this summer and at the top of the list are those in Pond 12. This winter, we were able to plant 420 acres of upland cover in the recently burned area. We have been hoping for spring rains to help our nesting cover grow. The GIWA staff are going to do what we can to make sure next season is better.



### Harvest Results

In the 2019/2020 waterfowl season, GIWA hunters shot 1,875 less ducks and attracted 864 less hunters than in the 2018/2019 season. Our season average was 1.36 which is slightly down from our 2018/2019 season average of 1.47. The top 5 ducks changed as well:

1. Northern Shoveler (1,408)
2. Green-winged Teal (1,084)
3. American Wigeon (877)
4. Mallard (816)
5. Goldeneye (354)

Northern Pintail fell from our top 5, but the one-bird limit makes it a hard bird to keep on the list. Northern Shoveler harvest was similar, but American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, and Mallards changed. American Wigeon and Green-winged Teal accounted for 1,327 out of the 1,875 birds harvested, and we were below last year's numbers taken. For comparison, in the 2018/2019, the top 5 birds harvested:

1. Green-winged Teal (1,714)
2. American Wigeon (1,574)
3. Northern Shoveler (1,491)
4. Mallard (1,055)
5. Northern Pintail (409)

Harvest numbers fluctuate over the years, and while this season was tough based on numbers, our hunters had a good time. We safely made it through another season, and we hope next year will be better.

### Season Numbers

Date	Total water-fowl Hunters	Total Ducks	Total Geese	Total Water-fowl	Average
<b>2019/2020 Season</b>					
X	3,992	5,364	55	5,419	1.36
<b>2018/2019 Season</b>					
X	4,856	7,239	43	7,282	1.47
<b>2017/2018 Season</b>					
X	5,333	8,750	184	8,934	1.67
<b>2016/2017 Season Flood year closed most of January</b>					
X	3,758	3,598	30	3628	0.96

### Where Are The Ducks Nesting?

In 2020, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) is going to survey for breeding waterfowl in areas outside of the typical upland nesting fields at Grizzly Island Wildlife Area to study and better understand the value and importance that duck clubs and their seasonal wetlands are to breeding waterfowl populations in Suisun Marsh. USGS scientists are interested in working with willing landowners to search for breeding ducks within drained seasonal wetlands, adjacent uplands, and along levees. Suisun Marsh waterfowl typically start nesting in early April, and therefore, priority sites are those that are dry (and driveable in ATVs) by mid-April. Over the next 2-3 weeks, USGS staff will be reaching out to landowners regarding permission to access their property. If you would like more information on this work, feel free to reach out to Dr. Mark Herzog ([mherzog@usgs.gov](mailto:mherzog@usgs.gov); 530-669-5086) for more information.



# Suisun Resource Conservation District

## Annual Spring Landowner Workshop

**SRCD is postponing the Spring Landowner Workshop to assess concerns over the COVID-19 Pandemic situation.**

Learn about Recent Issues and Updates Affecting Suisun Marsh and Visit with your Neighboring Landowners

**Date: To be Determined**

**Time:** 8:00 – sign in, coffee & snacks; 8:30 - 2:00 -- presentations

**Location:** FP Smith Equipment, 3190 Ramsey Road, Fairfield

**Cost:** \$15 (coffee, snacks, lunch included)

**RSVP:** by Friday, April 17, 2020

**Workshop topics will include:**

### SUISUN MARSH LANDOWNER DISCUSSION FORUM

***Hunter Satisfaction, Changing Conditions, and Improving Success***

#### NEW INFORMATION

A 3-D Elevation Map of Suisun Marsh  
Suisun Marsh Google Earth Landowner Access Map  
BCDC Suisun Marsh Local Protection Plan Update  
SRCD Local Protection Plan Update  
Updating Individual Ownership Habitat Management Plans

#### PERMITS

Working Under General Permit #3 (RGP#3)  
Letter of Permission (LOP) for Dredging  
Work Requiring a BCDC Permit  
Department of Fish and Wildlife Incidental Take Permit (ITP)  
Required Landowner Threatened and Endangered Species Training

#### FUNDING

2020 PAI Cost Share Grant Programs, Rules, and Unified Application  
Water Manager's Program and the Portable Pump Program  
Presley Grant Program, Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Pest and Weed Programs, Status of Other Grants (Prop 1, Restoration Authority)

-----CUT AND MAIL WITH YOUR PAYMENT OR CALL 707-425-9302 x 6-----

~~I would like to RSVP for the SRCD Annual Spring Landowner Workshop April 22, 2020~~

**\*\*Please remit to: SRCD, 2544 Grizzly Island Rd., Suisun City, CA 94585**

Enclosed is a check for # attendees: \_\_\_\_\_ or for credit card, call Kelli 707-425-9302 x6

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Club #: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Water Salinity Conditions

By SRCD Water Managers

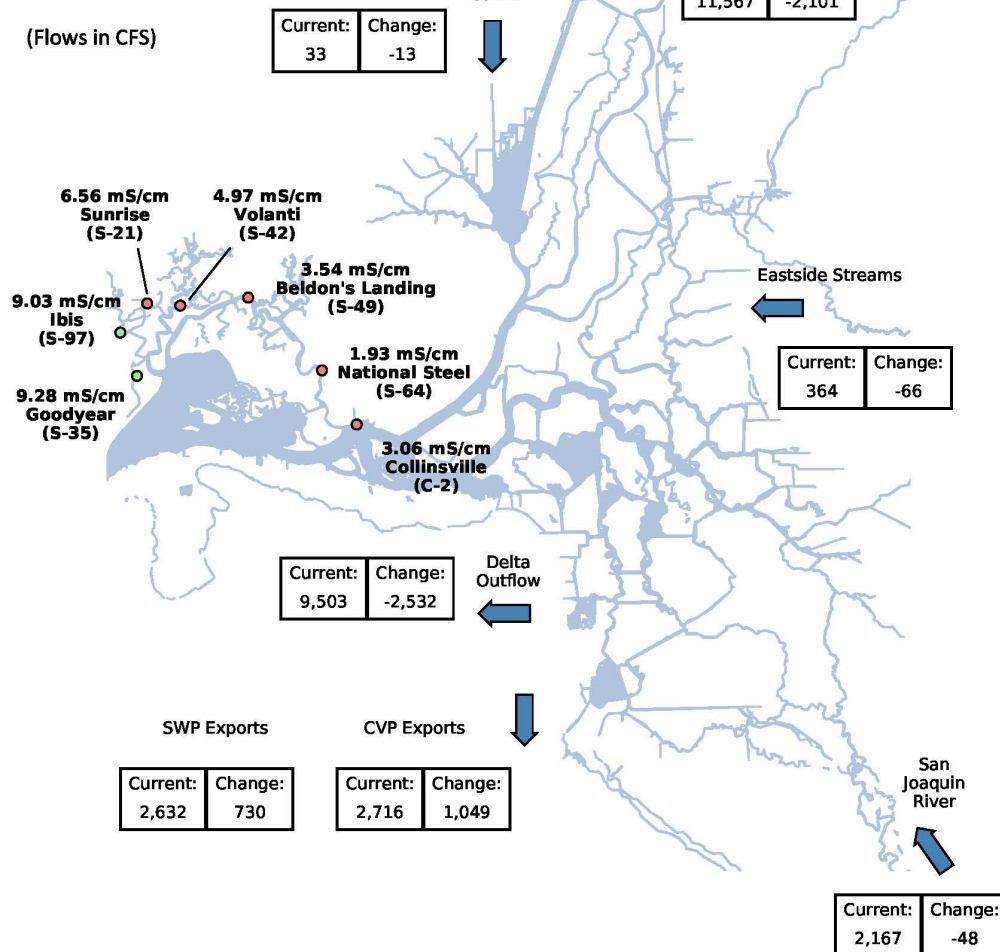
Last spring we saw fantastic salinity conditions across the marsh, where western slough salt levels were the lowest they had been in many years. Unfortunately, we did not get the same rain this year. Reservoir storage is still relatively high, and the operation of the salinity control gates is keeping the salinities consistent so far this year. However, we are already seeing the salinities in the marsh shoot up to triple what they were last March as we head towards what is likely to be the start of a drought year. There are many ways to manage ponds, and we can always hope for additional rain in the later spring months, but proactive management would dictate draining and leaching as soon as possible.

For more information on current salinities around the Suisun Marsh and near your duck club, check out the DWR daily salinity readings at the monitoring and compliance stations.

If you plan on irrigating your club or running spring leach cycles, remember to work around the salmon and smelt diversion restrictions during the spring.

### Delta Tributary Daily Average Flows & Suisun Marsh Daily Mean High Tide Salinities as of **March 10, 2020** (Standard = 8 mS/cm)

(Flows in CFS)



### Reminder!

The **Spring Salmon Unscreened Diversion Restriction** is now in effect, and landowners are prohibited from diverting unscreened water from Suisun, Montezuma, Nurse, and Denverton Sloughs from February 21 through March 31.

If you are a diverter from a slough or bay that is under the Delta Smelt Unscreened Diversion Restriction, water control inspections begin April 1 and last until May 31. Landowners are currently required to not divert any water without a fish-screen, but during the smelt restriction period, 20 percent of diversion capacity is allowed.

*Land Of The West Wind*  
SRCD Newsletter

2544 Grizzly Island Road  
Suisun CA 94585

Address Correction Requested



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### **Seeking Used Equipment Donations for Lower Joice Island**

The Suisun Resource Conservation District is seeking donations of used equipment in good condition for habitat management at Lower Joice Island. Equipment needs would include: 8 to 12-foot offset disk harrow; >48" zero-turn ride-on lawnmower; extended fork front loader, construction section barge, 4x4 ATV or UTV. Donations may be tax deductible – consult a tax specialist.

### **Water Reporting Reminder!**

Remember to fill out the diversion reporting for last year (2019). The deadline to report is July 1st, 2020. To file your diversion report, go to <https://rms.waterboards.ca.gov> and login with your Water Rights ID and Password. Logins and passwords are included with the letter that was mailed to you by the California Water Board. If you have questions on how to file, SRCD Water Managers are happy to help you.

Missing your Diversion ID and/or Password? Contact the Office of the Delta Watermaster at the State Water Resources Control Board: Telephone: (916) 319-8264