

Tuesday, April 12, 1988

## Save the farmlands

The glowing article citing advantages of the Discovery Bay surely would whet the appetite of one seeking a home where relaxation, beauty and location are important. But there is a larger issue.

What do we do when much or all of the good farmland has been developed for housing or other money making projects?

Who has the responsibility to look to the future to see where our food supplies are to come from? Is it the responsibility of the developer? Hardly. Is it the responsibility of the individual seeking a home?

Or is no one responsible for thinking out the future of California's fertile lands when it comes to providing of food for a growing population?

Agricultural land in Brentwood area and all throughout east Contra Costa County is being eyed for substantial development. Who will save it from being another shopping mall, housing project or business park? How important will it be to the future to keep this fine agricultural land in production?

All sorts of issues are involved. Do we wait until there is a crisis, where food for the population isn't being produced in adequate quantity or where food costs for people in cities are forced up and up as a result of high transportation-production costs?

Under the existing system, responsibility for the future lies with elected officials at various levels. They have difficulty in that if not supported by the electorate. In the end it is probably "we, the people" who should look out for the future. We should assure ourselves that land use policies are not doing irreparable damage to future food supplies.

A.B. McNabney  
Walnut Creek



# Oil Spill a Disaster For Nesting Animals

By L. A. Chung  
Chronicle Staff Writer

Hundreds of birds and animals will die a slow death from the big oil spill at the Shell Marsh near Martinez, which happened in the middle of the nesting season, wildlife experts said yesterday.

"There are more animals involved now than we will ever know," said Diana Granados, operations manager of the Alexander Lindsay Junior Museum, a natural history museum in Walnut Creek. "It's breeding season; the birds were sitting on little babies."

About 21,000 gallons of crude oil from the Shell Oil refinery escaped into the marsh east of Interstate 680 on Saturday, causing cleanup teams to race against time and water currents to slow the damage.

Many of the 100 oil-coated birds, muskrats, turtles and other animals recovered yesterday from the marsh were already dead. They represented a fraction of those that eventually will die of anemia or kidney failure, said Captain Ryan Broddrick of the state Fish and Game Department.

As birds preen the oil from their breast feathers, they often ingest fatal amounts of the toxic substance. Nesting birds also transfer the oil from their breasts to eggs, which often prevents the chicks from hatching.

"In this kind of oil, they will die in 48 hours," Granados said. "They're just plugged (and unable to breathe)."

Yesterday, workers for

Clean Bay Inc., an oil industry contractor, floated on small skiffs and waded in rubber boots through the marsh. They picked up small, oil-sodden masses that could scarcely be identified.

Some birds were immobile, as if straitjacketed by the thick

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*'It's breeding season; the birds were sitting on little babies'*

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crude oil, their eyes the only things moving. The workers handed the birds to waiting volunteers, who placed the birds in ventilated, cardboard pet boxes and drove their fragile cargo to rescue centers.

An estimated 100 species of animals and birds use the marsh, said by the National Audubon Society to be one of the most important wetlands in Contra Costa County.

The marsh will take years to recover from the severe ecological damage, Broddrick said. Many plants in the marsh will die from chemicals or being submerged by the weight of the oil, he said.

The damage could have been worse had the spill occurred a month earlier during the migration season, when millions of birds stop to rest in the Bay Area, said marine biologist Jim Beckwith of the state Fish and Game Department.

"Most people think it's just a

muddy piece of water," lamented Al McNabney, vice president of conservation of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society, who has fought for five years to save the Shell Marsh from development.

In truth, he said, the marsh functions as a natural "kidney" for the area. Its plants absorb chemicals, trap sediments and slow erosion.

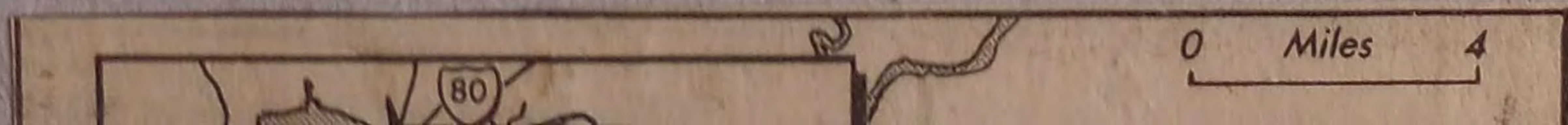
A team of 15 volunteer bird-cleaners arrived yesterday to pitch in at the Lindsay museum, which cared for about 40 birds and animals. The International Bird Rescue Research Center in Berkeley received 60 fowl and other wildlife. The rest were taken care of by other agencies.

Cinnamon teal ducks, pintails and wild mallards were so thickly coated that Granados had to clean them before she could tell what kind of birds they were. Herons, avocets and other waterfowl were also brought in.

At the International Bird Rescue Research Center, staff members arduously cleansed the birds' nostrils and beaks, then used tubes to flush their systems with rehydrating solutions, similar to Gatorade.

It took nine basins of gentle dish detergent to clean a small pie-billed grebe, said Joan Schimmelman of the center. Most of the birds will wear little fabric ponchos that keep them from preening their feathers and swallowing more of the oil, Schimmelman said.

Chronicle reporters George Williamson and Bill Gordon also contributed to this report.





SF Chronicle, 4/25/88

# Oil Spill Threatens East Bay Marshland

By Bill Gordon and George Williamson  
Chronicle Staff Writers

Cleanup crews slogged through marshland yesterday to contain 21,000 gallons of oil that leaked from the Shell Oil Refinery in Martinez and threatened severe ecological damage along 10 miles of shoreline.

The Coast Guard yesterday classified the crude oil spill as "major," largely because of its threat to marshes in the delta region.

The spill, discovered Saturday drifting into a Martinez marsh and the Carquinez Strait, has already coated hundreds of birds and other animals, killed plant life and caused damage that experts said will last for years.

The spill closed nearby marinas and left dozens of boats and rocky beachfronts stained by the sticky oil. Officials said fishing in the area could be disrupted for several seasons. The "mothball fleet" of World War II ships docked near Benicia also was reported surrounded by gobs of oil.

The spill of at least 500 barrels of oil came from a broken pipe in a storage tank, investigators said. The leak was plugged shortly after the spill was discovered.

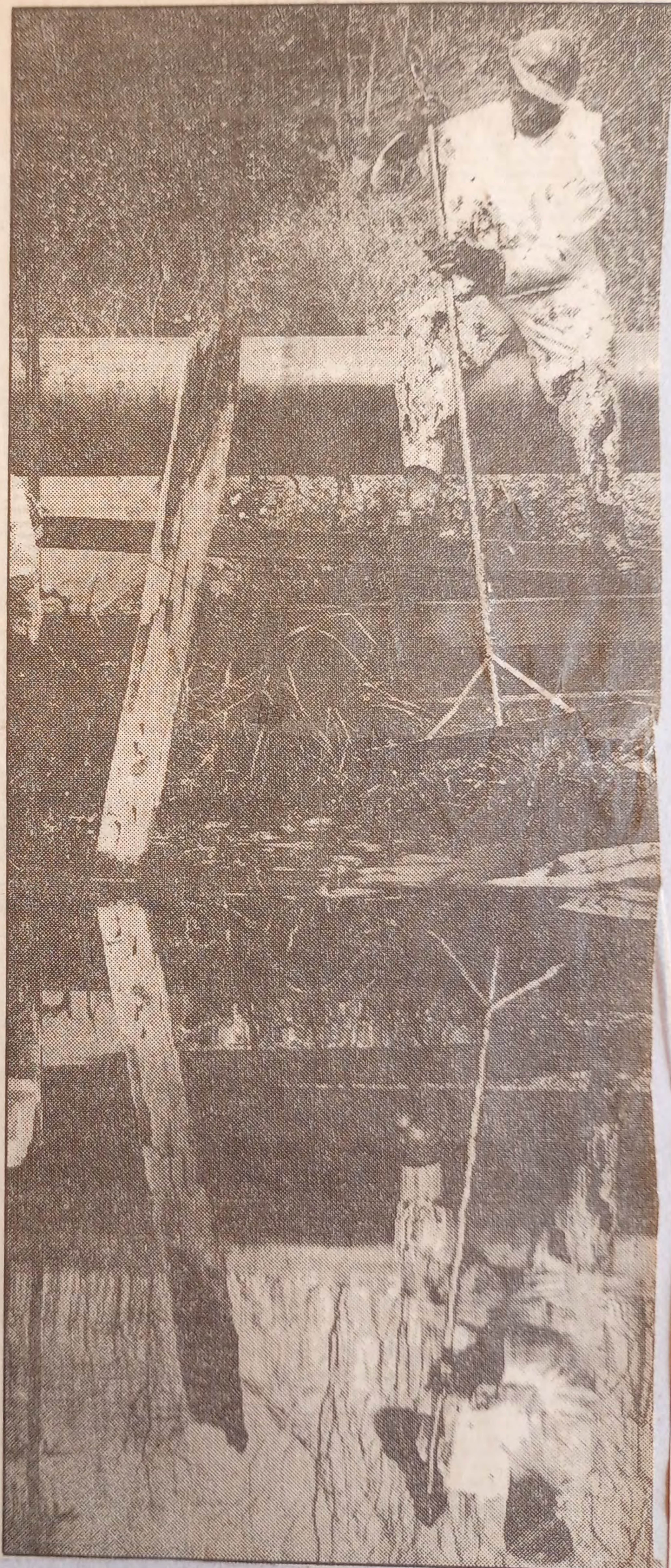
Coast Guard officials first estimated the spill at 500 barrels, or 21,000 gallons, but said yesterday that the total could be much higher.

Most of the thick, smelly oil was contained in the Shell Marsh, a 100-acre wetland surrounding Peyton Slough just east of the Benicia-Martinez Bridge. But an estimated 4,000 gallons escaped into

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BY BRANT WARD/THE CHRONICLE

A Shell Oil Co. worker sat atop an oil pipeline while cleaning crude oil that spilled into the marsh





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After checking with the Tosco refinery in Martinez, where employees said they had no leaks, the Shell workers traced the spill through Peyton Slough to a part of the Shell plant built about four years ago, Sharkey said.

There, they found oil pouring from a valve that vents collected rainwater from the top of a storage tank. The tank has a lid that floats on the oil; rainwater drains through a coiled tube that runs through the tank to the outside.

Sharkey said the plastic-and-metal pipe had apparently broken inside the tank, admitting oil instead of rainwater. The oil gushed out the drain and into a ditch, and headed for the slough.

Shell workers aren't sure how long the oil flowed before the valve was shut off, he said. Measuring the spill is hard because the 300,000-barrel tank is continually filled from a pipeline and drained for refining, he said. A barrel is 42 gallons.

Sharkey had no estimate of cleanup costs.

Beckwith said the blackened banks of Peyton Slough would have to be dug up, "reeds, topsoil, bottom soil, everything."

At the slough, Donna Klein, a member of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society chapter, bundled birds into cardboard boxes to be taken to the Lindsay Museum in Walnut Creek or the International Bird Rescue Research Center in Berkeley.

"A good percentage of them don't make it," said Klein, her clothes smeared with oil. Nearby was a box containing plastic-wrapped remains of dead birds and rats.

"It (Peyton Slough) is probably the most important wetland we

have," she said. "The Audubon Society just won a big battle to preserve it and keep it from being sold ... and now this happens."

The Martinez City Council rejected a proposal in 1986 for a 100-acre business park along Waterfront Road. The land is outside city limits but in the city's sphere of influence.

Environmentalists opposed the plan, which originally called for filling some wetlands. Migratory and native birds depend on the marshes for food and places to nest, and some endangered species live there.

Current plans to widen the Benicia bridge may also encroach on the wetlands, said Al McNabney, vice president for conservation of the Mt. Diablo Audubon chapter.

"Unfortunately, everything that's a wetland seems to be an area that somebody wants to build on," he said.

At the Lindsay Museum, volunteers wearing plastic trash bags bathed birds and gave them medicine and food. Three western pond turtles and several muskrats had also been brought in. The muskrats died.

Sandy Fender and Es Anderson hand-washed a mallard in a solution of Dawn detergent. They were also using a Water Pik for "odd corners," Anderson said.

"It's nasty, thick stuff," Fender said, preparing a third rinse for the bird. The duck would probably recover once its feathers were dried and groomed, she said.

At the Martinez Regional Shoreline Park, about 25 firefighters of the East Bay Regional Park District prepared Sunday evening to board boats to cross the strait.

Fire Capt. Jim Journeay said the firefighters were called to protect



Times/David Toerge

**AN OIL-DRENCHED** mallard duck tries to clean himself along the Martinez shoreline.

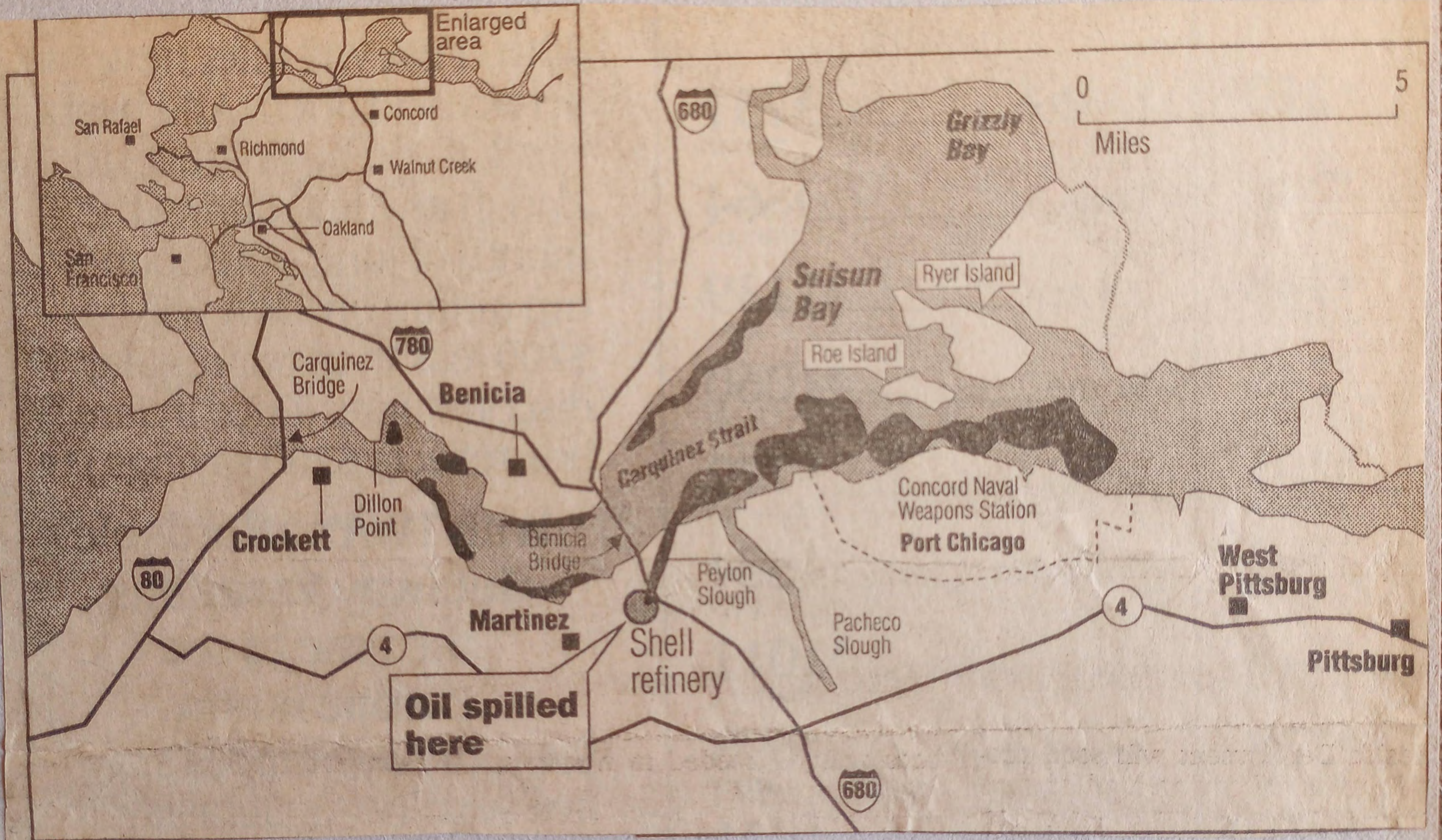
the park wetlands, where a high tide Saturday had deposited oil. Absorbent booms and pads will keep oil out of the park, he said.

The firefighters offered to spread absorbent booms and pads along Suisun Marsh, due north of the spill site, he said. The rising tide, expect-

ed to push the oil toward the marsh, would peak at 11 p.m., he said.

Shell last had a major spill in June 1986, when 8,000 gallons of gasoline spilled out of a tank and into a ditch. Fumes forced 75 people to leave their houses.







Monday, April 25, 1988 ☆

# Oil spill clogs wetla

## 100 soaked birds collected for cleaning

By Charley Lindsey

Staff writer

MARTINEZ — Crude oil bathed 10 miles of shoreline and clogged sensitive wetlands near Martinez Sunday as cleanup crews fought to corral a 21,000-gallon spill from the Shell Oil refinery.

The leak was first reported Saturday afternoon as 4,200 gallons, 100 barrels. But the Coast Guard Sunday classified it as a major spill.

At least 100 oil-soaked birds, plus muskrats and turtles, were collected in marshes and the Carquinez Strait. The animals were taken to wildlife rescue centers in Walnut Creek and Berkeley, where volunteers said many of the creatures would die.

Patches of the heavy oil were reported from east of the Carquinez Strait to the west end of Ryer Island, north of Port Chicago. Workers in boats set out thousands of feet of floating booms to catch the oil. Other workers, on shore, sucked up the crude into vacuum trucks.

As the tide began to rise late Sunday, cleanup workers crossed the strait to Suisun Marsh to barricade the 55,000-acre wetlands from floating oil.

Crews from Clean Bay Inc., a cooperative funded by oil and chemical companies, skimmed the open waters. A helicopter guided them to patches of oil.

The Coast Guard estimated cleanup could continue for weeks.

"It's all the way along the banks," said state Fish and Game Warden Jim Beckwith as he surveyed Peyton Slough, across Interstate 680 from the refinery.

"Some of the areas you can pick it up in lumps. It's far worse than they expected."

Dozens of game wardens, wildlife volunteers and cleanup workers roamed Peyton Slough, which received the first surge of oil from a storage tank.

Shell took responsibility for the spill and hired the cleanup workers, said company spokesman Bill Sharkey.

Workers on the company's wharf saw oil on the water about 2 p.m. Saturday, Sharkey said.



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SPILLED CRUDE OIL darkens Peyton Slough and its mar



# Area volunteers pitch in to wash away oil

By Annie Nakao  
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

Some die in the water, sinking to the bottom. Others make it to shore, where they become living clumps of oil with webbed feet and beaks.

The luckiest feathered victims of the weekend's Shell oil spill off Martinez end up in the hands of folks like Margrete Heising, a volunteer at the Alexander Lindsay Junior Museum in Walnut Creek.

Two days after the spill, the beehive of activity at the museum's wildlife habitat quarters had barely slowed. Volunteers like Heising worked elbow-to-elbow in the tiny area to wash, dry and warm 14 birds and other wildlife rescued from Peyton Slough.

"You really want these birds to survive," Heising said. "You can't say, 'Oh, a little oil's left, what the heck.' It keeps you going — washing and washing — long after your hands almost dissolve."

Roughly 100 oil-covered birds found in the freshwater marsh were taken to Berkeley's International Bird Rescue Research Center, where a similar cleanup was taking place.

The California Conservation Corps is attempting to collect as many as 200 more birds and other animals on the Benicia side of the Benicia-Martinez Bridge, said Joan Schimmelman, spokeswoman for the Berkeley center.

At the Lindsay Museum, 21 birds and other animals had been



Examiner/Mark Costantini

**Kay Brady extends a rescue net to oil-stained ducks and other endangered Suisun Bay wildlife**

brought in by rescuers. Seven animals died Sunday: two muskrats, two cinnamon teals and three mallard ducks. Still alive were three pond turtles, avocets, teals, mallards, pintails and a Great Blue Her-

on. Some had undergone as many as 18 washings.

"I hope he hangs on," Diana Granados, museum operations manager said of the heron, who huddled with eyes glazed in a nearby cage.

The bird had been washed several times but workers stopped after the heron became lethargic.

"When you're dealing with wild animals, you're dealing with very fragile things," said Granados.

"They don't appreciate being handled. And when you add illness to that..."

Peyton Slough is regarded as one of the area's richest ecological preserves.

"It's such a good habitat being ruined," said Pam Nave, wildlife supervisor. "It'll take years to clean up the area."

Sandy Fender, a museum staffer, said many other birds will die because they haven't been cleaned. There are other effects.

"All of these wildlife have babies in the marsh who aren't going to make it," said Fender.

Since the crisis, the museum's 30 trained volunteers have worked round-the-clock schedules dressed in makeshift overalls made of brown plastic garbage bags to protect them from the oil.

Volunteers were shocked by the severity of the damage.

"I was wondering if we could ever get *real* birds out of that (mess)," said Heising, an eight-year volunteer. "I'd never seen them so heavily oiled."

The first birds recovered were "defecating straight oil," said Nave.

The spill came at the start of the spring nesting season, the busiest time for the museum, which cares for everything from orphan opossums to injured owls and homeless nestlings.

"On top of that, we have an oil spill," said Granados.

She said the spill was especially

**Violation of U.S. Law Admitted**

4/29/88

S.F. Chronicle

is certain to rise again.



# Spill to be costly to Shell

. 77 No. 335 Saturday, April 30, 1988



**COAST GUARD CAPT. DAVID ZAWADZKI**, right, and marine biologist Jim Swanson, left, explain the effects of the oil spill to Rep. George Miller, D-Martinez.

Times/Eric Rahkonen

## EPA vows to take 'strongest action'

By Mike Moran

Staff writer

The Environmental Protection Agency will hit Shell Oil with strong penalties for its massive oil spill, a federal official said Friday.

"We want to take as strong an action as we can to show the significance of this event," said Daniel McGovern, regional administrator for the EPA.

McGovern was attending a conference in San Francisco on saving the Bay and the Delta estuary. He joined environmentalists and scientists at the conference in decrying Shell Oil's accidental spill of at least 175,000 gallons of crude oil last Saturday.

"Tears are an appropriate response," he said of the public reaction to the spill.

McGovern said the EPA will join state agencies in determining the amount of fines to levy against the oil company.

Some of the money could be used to set up a long-term monitoring system of the industries along the Bay and Delta waterways, he said.

Rep. George Miller, D-Martinez, said Friday that Shell Oil should set up a trust fund to study the long-term environmental effects of its oil spill.

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On Wednesday, Shell officials said that workers left the drain valve on the pipe open, breaking Federal regulations and written company policy and allowing oil to run into the slough.

Hossain Kazemi, an engineer with the state Regional Water Quality Control Board, said cleanup crews had collected 462,000 gallons of oil and water by Wednesday. He said that assuming half of this is oil, the spill could cost \$25 million.

### From Page 1A

Calling the spill a "a devastating environmental insult to the marsh, the Bay and to the City of Martinez," Miller said it would be a "terrible mistake" to think the effects of the spill will disappear once the oil is no longer visible.



**COAST GUARD CAPT. DAVID ZAWADZKI**, right, and marine biologist Jim Swanson, left, explain the effects of the oil spill to Rep. George Miller, D-Martinez.

Times/Eric Rahkonen

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Hossain Kazemi, an engineer with the state Regional Water Quality Control Board, said cleanup crews had collected 462,000 gallons of oil and water by Wednesday. He said that assuming half of this is oil, the spill could exceed 231,000 gallons.

Shell officials stand by their lower estimate of 175,000 gallons, saying much of what has been collected is mud and water.

Coast Guard Captain David Zawadzki, said that most of the free floating oil has been picked up. The remainder, much of it located in hard to reach marsh areas, is going to take a long time to collect, he said.

To reach some of this oil, cleanup crews have been cutting down grasses in Shell Marsh near Peyton Slough, pushing the oil into open areas and vacuuming it up.

Zawadzki said that some marshes are more sensitive than others and cleanup crews may do more harm than good. Each marsh will have to be evaluated separately, he said.

Due to higher tides and stronger currents, Zawadzki said that sheens of oil have spread west to Benicia's South Hampton Bay and to the Carquinez Bridge. Strong easterly winds have countered the oil's westward flow, he said.

Zawadzki said he doesn't expect the oil to reach San Francisco Bay although it "is a possibility" if the

wind changes direction.

Tides will continue to rise, pushing oil farther into the marshes, until Wednesday, Zawadzki said.

To the east, the spill has spread to Ryer Island, a large nesting area for waterfowl, he said.

Swanson said the Fish and Game Department plans to study how the oil affects the island's bird population.

He also said that the clams and other animals living in oil-saturated mudflats will die.

The danger also exists that ducklings, hatching in the marshes on the Martinez side of the Benicia Bridge, could be affected, Swanson said.

Exhausted cleanup workers from East Bay Regional Park District and California Conservation Corps were relieved early Friday morning by replacements from Clean Bay and IT.

Clean Bay is an oil company cooperative that cleans up spills.

Five days in a row slogging through oily waters and marshes took its toll on some of the workers.

"The first couple days we had people getting dizzy from the vapors," said park district supervisor

Bill Nichols.

"When I get home at night my kids are asleep, and I get up so early to get down here they're just barely getting up to go to school," Nichols said.

Park Ranger Sue Ferrera said the stress from the cleanup made her lose concentration while driving home to San Francisco late Thursday night. She said she passed a police car and was pulled over for speeding.

Despite the stress and strained personal lives, Ferrera, Nichols and Tom Billecci, a worker from Pt. Pinole Park, said they weren't too exhausted to keep going.

"I promised Bill I'd help 24 hours a day if I had to," Billecci said.

Ferrera said the three haven't had time to relax and notice how worn out they are.

"It's hard," Ferrera said. "We take care of this place. There used to be ducks and birds. Now they're not here. They're either dead or relocated."

— Staff writers Terri Weintraub and Donna Hemmila contributed to this report.

#### From Page 1A

Calling the spill a "a devastating environmental insult to the marsh, the Bay and to the City of Martinez," Miller said it would be a "terrible mistake" to think the effects of the spill will disappear once the oil is no longer visible.

"We should learn something from this," Miller said after surveying the spill area. "We should learn what happens to a marsh over a long period of time."

"Fortunately Shell has taken full responsibility . . . and we hope they'll live up to it," he said.

Jim Swanson, a marine biologist with the Fish and Game Department, said that although the spill area will look natural in about a year, the area's animal life won't return to normal for three or four years.

Miller said that while he thinks Shell should put money into the fund, the company "cannot be allowed to define the damage."

Miller made his remarks after a four-hour tour with Coast Guard and other cleanup officials. The tour included a boat ride and a walk through the spill area.

The spill, which was first noticed about 2 p.m. last Saturday, sent oil down nearby Peyton Slough and in Suisun Bay and the Carquinez Strait. The leak happened in a flexible drain pipe that carries water from the roof and through the 12.6 million gallon oil tank.



# Oily birds get the cleaning

Extra work spills  
on to volunteers  
at Lindsay Museum

By Rebecca Barron

Assistant features editor

**Y**OU COULDN'T HAVE picked a worse time for an oil spill.

This is the beginning of the busy season for the wildlife volunteers at the Lindsay Museum in Walnut Creek. It's not unusual for 100 baby birds and animals to come in to the Wildlife Department for care each day. Some of the volunteers have nicknamed it "baby bird season."

On top of that, since Saturday they've added to their patient list 47 blackened birds from the marshes around Martinez, victims of an oil spill that started with a leak in a Shell Oil refinery storage tank. It's a lot to handle, but the staff and volunteers tackled it with determination.

Please see **BIRDS**, Page 2D



Times/Dan Rosenstrauch

**ES ANDERSON** and Sandy Fender clean the oil off a western sandpiper at the Lindsay Museum in Walnut Creek.



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Times/Dan Rosenstrauch

**ES ANDERSON** and Sandy Fender clean the oil off a western sandpiper at the Lindsay Museum in Walnut Creek.

#### From Page 8A

On Wednesday morning, volunteers washed a western sandpiper, a shorebird about the size of a black-bird. Wildlife Department staffer Sandy Fender held the frightened sandpiper in a towel. Volunteer Es Anderson hooked up a Waterpick, which is used to wash the hard-to-reach places. Both women wore white rubber gloves and large trash bags over their clothes to keep off the oil.

#### Heron may survive

Still the oily goo took its toll. "My hands are so sore after a few days," Anderson said, pulling off a glove to show red blotches on her hand. She pushed the glove back on and began to clean the tiny sandpiper in a solution of water and dish-washing soap.

After thoroughly scrubbing of the sandpiper, Fender wrapped the silent little bird in a clean towel and gently patted it dry.

Next, Anderson and Fender washed the great blue heron for the 13th time. It was a miracle the bird was still alive, everyone said. It wasn't until about the sixth scrubbing that Anderson knew what kind of bird it was, she said. Its yellow and blue markings are starting to come through again. It may survive, though it's still to soon to know, Fender said.

Anderson, head of the team from the Bird Rescue Research Center in Berkeley, said the rest of her team was working on more birds in Berkeley. Bird Rescue volunteers are trained to handle oil-soaked

birds. The animals from the spill are being sent to both Berkeley and Walnut Creek.

After four straight days, the staff expected the worst to be over. Birds that are not found and treated in the first couple of days following the spill will have already died, staffer Pam Nave said.

"It's horrible. It's the worst oil I've ever handled," said Anderson, who has worked with the museum in oil-spill situations since 1971.

"We've lost a lot (of animals). It's a particularly nasty one because its gotten into the marshes. They're very fragile."

The Department of Fish and Game estimates the spill has destroyed 100 acres of environmentally sensitive marshland along Suisun Bay and threatens to inflict long-term damage on birds and wildlife.

Fender said Thursday that of the 47 birds the volunteers in Walnut Creek have treated, 18 have died. Five have recovered enough to be released.

Work goes on with the ones they can save.

#### Animal-loving volunteers

The volunteers here love animals and love the variety of animals they handle.

"I've seen everything from eagles to deer to opossum," said Lura Dymond, as she fed a baby finch with a small syringe.

In one corner of a room, Dymond and volunteers Pat DeBow and Kathie Hammil fed the dozens of baby sparrows and finches. At the museum, the nestlings live in

cardboard ice cream buckets. Along the opposite wall are cages of mature birds. Some have signs on their cages saying "cat caught." On the shelves are labeled jars of animal food. In the middle of the shelf is a coffee-making machine.

The bird-washers share a corner of the Animal Library room, a place where children can check out rabbits and guinea pigs for a week at a time. The staff room is also stacked with cages of birds. And behind that is a closet with a couple of cardboard boxes housing some of the oil-drenched ducks.

Among all these boxes and cages, about a dozen humans scurry to get food, feed animals, clean cages, give shots and bathe the animals — all the while trying not to run into anyone else.

#### First, a training session

Despite the commotion, it's clear to the visitor that Operations Manager Diane Granados and her staff, Nave and Fender, have a system that works. All volunteers go through a daylong training session, which the museum's Wildlife Department offers every few months. So when volunteers are then assigned to weekly three-hour shifts, they know what to do.

Even when they're not facing an ecological disaster, volunteers are busy at this time of year. In "baby bird season," volunteers Dymond of Concord, DeBow of Orinda and Kathie Hammil of Concord would still spend Wednesday mornings caring for little sparrows and finches.

## Museum needs supplies, help

What can you do to help the Wildlife Department of the Lindsay Museum?

Primarily, it needs supplies and volunteers to do laundry.

It needs ice cream buckets to hold the hundreds of baby birds that they receive, margarine containers to hold bird food, apples to feed the squirrels, and pine cones that will be used for toys for larger animals (and for food,

if the cones still contain pine nuts).

The museum also needs volunteers to take home a load or two of dirty towels for washing and drying during the next few days while the crunch is still on. The museum would rather use the hot water for cleaning the animals than for laundry.

If you can help, call the museum at 935-1978.

Most are brought in when people trim or spray their trees and find a bird's nest in the process. Some are injured by cats.

The nestlings are hungry and want to be fed constantly. But the volunteers can only feed each one every hour or so, Dymond said. "We feed the baby birds. We run and do something else and we come back and feed the baby birds again." These three women are among the 300 trained volunteers who carve out a chunk of time each week to care for the animals. Out of those 300, 60 are very active, Fender said. They range from 16 to 85 — men and women. Many are housewives. The ones who work put in their time at the center on weekends. It operates on three shifts a day, seven days a week.

Nave estimated they have a 50-percent success rate with the baby birds. The hospital or volunteers generally keep the birds six to eight weeks before they are returned to the wild.

#### A menagerie at home

Hammil, a shift supervisor for the volunteers, has worked at the

hospital for eight years. She's one of those people who take work home with them. She has about a dozen opossums and an aviary full of birds in her back yard. She also has a raccoon cage that is frequently filled. She keeps animals for up to two weeks after they've been released from the center but aren't ready to go back into the wild yet. She provides a halfway house, of sorts.

"I've always been an animal lover." A friend told her about the classes about eight years ago. It was fall when she first began her volunteer work. "It was so quiet and calm then. You could really take your time feeding the birds," she said as she gave a shot of antibiotics to a pigeon who had had a run-in with a cat.

"I come to see wild animals that I wouldn't get to see otherwise," she said. Getting more philosophical, she explained that her husband is in construction. For every new housing development that is built, animals lose their homes. "And these poor animals have nowhere to go. So it's (working at the hospital) giving back a little."

*Kent Fickett at microphone*



# 'Cannons' keep birds away from oil spill

By Peggy Sotcher

Staff writer

MARTINEZ — Noisemakers set up along the shores of the contaminated marshes here are scaring birds away from the dangerous, inky goo that has already cost 130 feathered creatures their lives.

The propane cannons, set out Monday night, have helped cut down on the number of oily birds found every morning in the sludge, says Brian Hunter, regional manager for the state Department of Fish and Game.

"They're keeping the birds from landing."

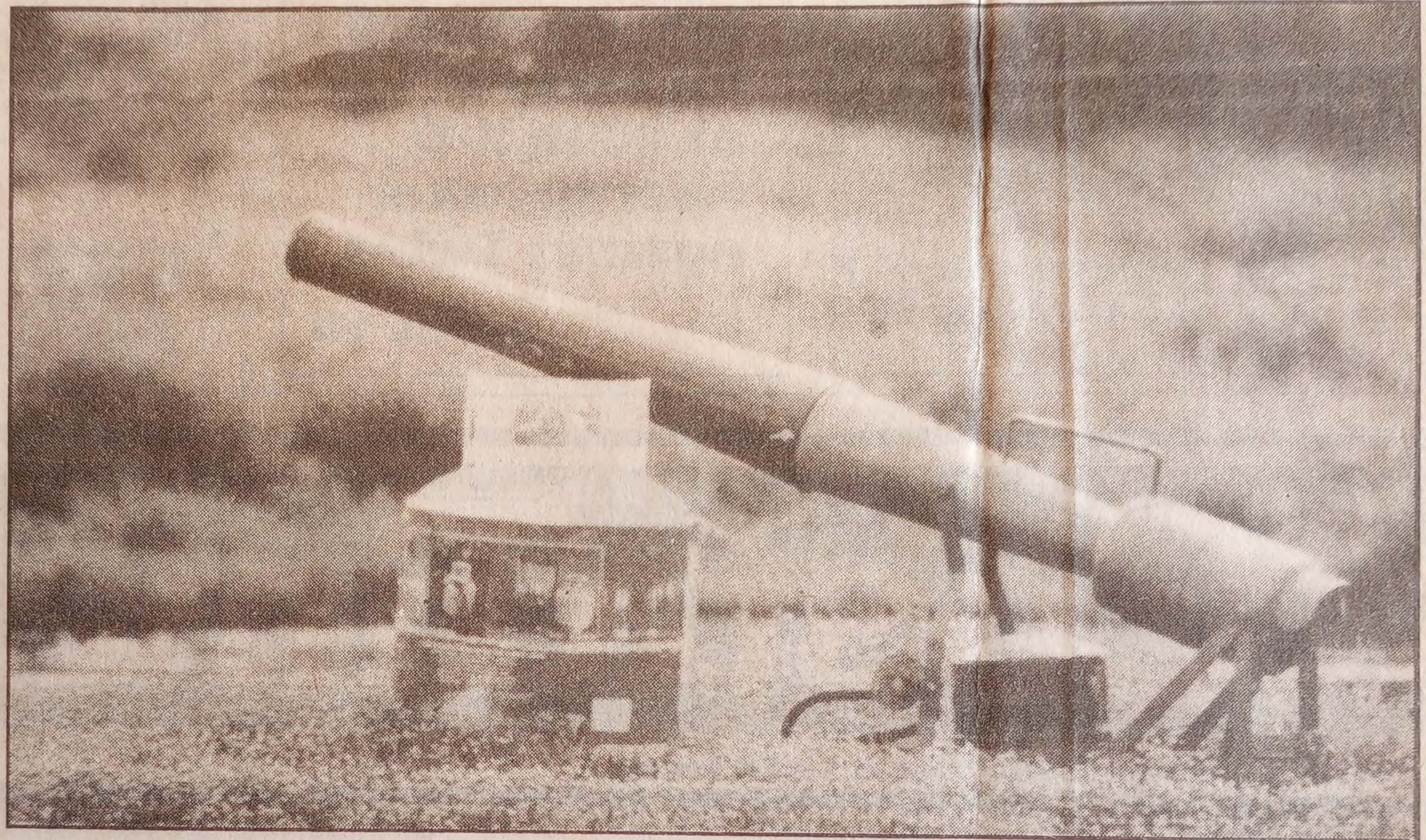
Each cannon sends out a soft "pop" every one to five minutes around the clock. Hunter says they sound like a car backfiring.

Without the noise, ducks and herons would fly right into the crude oil, Hunter said. Birds can't distinguish between oil and other murky things like dense algae, he said.

Fish and Game has tried coloring water near spills with red dye to discourage birds from landing, but that didn't work, Hunter said.

"Water is what attracts them."

The cannons, put into use 40 years ago, are also used by farmers and orchardists to keep birds from stealing crops. Between 12 and 16 are operating at a time near the Shell Oil refinery spill into Peyton Slough.



Times/Bob Pepping

**ONE OF THE** propane cannons used to scare birds away from contaminated marshes.

Since Monday, 10 Contra Costa residents have complained to Hunter's office about the noise, which can be heard at night as far away as Pleasant Hill.

"We tell them there are a whole lot of people in this country that care about saving the lives of these birds," Hunter said.

Once people know the reason for the noise, they usually are less upset, he said.

Because of the complaints, however, the cannons were scheduled to stop at 9 p.m. starting on Wednesday, said Fish and Game Capt. L.R. Broddick. Since birds usually roost about an hour after

sundown, he said, few will be trying to land after that. The noise will begin again by daylight.

The noisemakers will be taken out altogether in about five days, Hunter said. Like scarecrows, they become less effective after birds realize they won't be hurt by the sound.



By Richard Paoli  
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

**MARTINEZ** — An environmental coalition has called on federal and state agencies to make recommendations by Sept. 1 on ways to prevent Bay Area refineries from draining waste water directly into the Bay.

The demand was one of several made Monday near the site of the Shell Oil refinery spill that 10 days ago sent thousands of gallons of thick crude oil into the Bay and surrounding marsh and shore lands.

The spill occurred when crude oil was siphoned from a storage tank through an open valve on a storm drain pipe. Shell acknowledged violating federal environmental regulations that forbid keeping valves open during storms. The spill estimates range from 175,000 to 300,000 gallons.

Shell has been using more than 200 contracted workers to clean up the oil. The company faces \$3 million or more in fines and penalties, state officials said, and the cleanup could cost the oil company more than \$1 million.

More than 90 percent of the spill has "been mopped or vacuumed up," according to Coast Guard Capt. David Zawadzki, federal supervisor of the cleanup. "We have in front of us a long, meticulous cleanup."

Zawadzki said that high winds during the weekend helped by keeping oil in the Shell marsh "pinned along the west side" and prevented additional environmental damage.

But he said the cleanup of the marsh and shore areas will "take much longer than it took to skim and vacuum the oil on the open water" of Suisun Bay and the Carquinez Strait. Another Coast Guard spokesman said the cleanup would continue for several weeks.

The areas most affected by the spill are Ryer Island, Peyton Slough marsh, Benicia, Martinez marina and the Shell marsh.

The coalition spokesman, Kent Fickett of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society, read a list of demands, which included the government study of refinery drainage systems and called on Shell to:

- Secure the 240-acre Shell marsh for public ownership and eventual dedication to an agency, such as the East Bay Regional Park District. The land was owned by Shell and is for sale by its current owner, Caz Development Co.

- Create a trust fund to pay for

## Guns to shoo birds stolen at oily marsh

EXAMINER STAFF REPORT

Weekend thieves made off with three gas-powered guns that were placed in the Martinez marsh lands to scare off waterfowl from landing in oil from the Shell Oil Co. spill.

State Fish and Game officials warned that the guns, powered by propane gas, may be dangerous if whoever took them attempts to connect them to a gas source without a regulator.

"There is some danger if they try to hook them up to tanks," said Lt. Ed Nagel of the state Department of Fish and Game.

Nagel said the devices resemble little cannons that shoot off noisy blasts of air every few minutes to scare wild birds away from the affected areas. They are typically used in rice fields to keep ducks away.

The department has installed 10 of the guns in the Peyton Slough area since the spill.

long-term rehabilitation and maintenance of the affected wetlands.

- Fund a program, to be managed by government agencies, to enhance the Bay estuary system and wetlands.

The coalition also asked that fines paid by Shell to state and federal agencies be returned to local jurisdictions to fund fish and wildlife protection programs.

Shell had no immediate response to the demands by the coalition, which includes the Audubon Society, the Oceanic Society, Greenpeace, the Sierra Club, Earth First! and the Save San Francisco Bay Association.

Bill Sharkey, a Shell spokesman, said the coalition's list would be considered along with other proposals after the cleanup is complete.

As Zawadzki and Fickett spoke Monday, workers in the adjacent marsh could be seen using shovels, rakes and absorbent white pads to clean up the oil and cut oil-stained vegetation.

The marsh, said Fickett, is also one of the homes of two endangered species, the salt marsh harvest mouse and the clapper rail.





oil slick in Shell Marsh



Boxes of dead animals + birds



oil slick in Shell Marsh



Al McNabney





oil slick in Shell Marsh



Al McNabney



Norah Bain, Elizabeth Dickey, Donna Peake Klein,  
Winnie Young



From center: Kamran Alavi, Hugh Bain,  
Elizabeth Dickey, Helen Deman (blue hat)





oil in slough

May 7, 1988

# Shell admits violations prior to oil spill

By Rick de la Torre  
Times-Herald staff writer

MARTINEZ — Skeptical state lawmakers heard Friday that Shell Oil Co. may have been violating federal anti-pollution laws for four years prior to the disastrous 180,000-gallon oil spill April 23.

"The spill may be symptomatic of a time bomb that runs up and down California, where there are many manufacturing facilities in environmentally sensitive areas," said state Assemblyman Tom Hannigan, D-Suisun City, who attended a special

meeting of the state Senate Toxics Committee at Martinez City Hall.

The committee worried that if federal environmental laws are so poorly enforced, it can't take seriously the Reagan administration's assurances that major spills are unlikely during proposed exploratory oil drilling off California's coast.

"We've got to learn from this . . . that we should not increase the environmental risk to California by opening up even more areas to oil development," said Sen. Barry Keene, D-Benicia.

Shell refinery manager Ron Banducci said the company regularly violated its

safety plan by leaving a drain water reservoir valve open and unattended during rainy periods.

Shell's safety program, required by the federal Environmental Protection Agency, was last inspected by the EPA in 1984. The plan was updated by Shell in 1986, but was not submitted to the EPA.

Banducci said Shell's updated plan was available for inspection at its refinery offices, but was never seen by the EPA.

Kathleen Shimmin, EPA director of health and emergency planning, admitted companies are not required to submit updated reports. She was surprised to hear of

Shell's 1986 document and quickly asked to see a copy.

"Is it the usual practice (for companies) just to make out the plans, and see if you come by?" asked an angry Sen. Art Torres, D-Los Angeles, chairman of the committee. "The problem is we don't need new laws, we need new people to enforce them."

Shimmin said lack of funding and manpower allows regional EPA officials to make only 60 on-site inspections each year out of the 65,000 facilities across a four-

(See **Shell**, A2)

state area.

Benicia City Councilman Dirk Fulton said it was a money issue that prevented Shell from putting in a pump system for draining storm water runoff from the two tanks.

"The ah-shucks-we're-sorry approach isn't good enough for the citizens of Benicia," he said.

A broken storm drain pipe running through the inside of a storage tank permitted crude oil to seep into the refinery's drain water reservoir system and through the open valve into the environmentally sensitive wetlands surrounding the refinery.

The tank is one of two — among the 800 tanks at the refinery — that allow drain water to empty into the

reservoir system without going through a wastewater treatment facility.

Under persistent questioning from Torres and Keene, Banducci refused to say "human error" was to blame for the massive spill and whether improvements could be made on the storm drain system.

The committee called for early-warning systems to detect leaks from oil tanks; the submission of all updated safety plans to the EPA for review; chemical testing of refinery discharges; manual operation of outflow valves; a re-examination of the state's penalty system for violations; and earlier notification of affected local governments.

The committee also decided to ask the state Attorney General's Office to "vigorously prosecute" Shell for its admitted violation of environmental regulations.

The spill, 80 percent contained in the 100-acre Peyton Marsh, seeped into a 12-mile stretch of the Carquinez Strait, soiled miles of shorelines and at least 400 boats and killed more than 200 birds and small animals.

Cleanup activities continued along the Martinez and Benicia shorelines on Friday, according to a U.S. Coast Guard official. A representative from Clean Bay Inc., hired by Shell to clean up the mess, said up to \$2 million in work has already been done.

to Eureka and our waterways are too important to be used as industrial sewers," said Senator Art Torres, D-Los Angeles. "Bit by bit we are losing control of our environment."

Torres convened a hearing in Martinez to discuss who was responsible for the oil spill two weeks ago and to look at how spills can be prevented.

## 'A Time Bomb'

State lawmakers were incredulous that Shell Oil's failure to follow federal environmental laws went undetected for years until it caused a major oil spill into the critical bay wetlands.

Torres charged the EPA with some culpability for not keeping a closer eye on the oil company.

Shimmin conceded that Shell had violated federal law by not following its own operating procedures.

However, the EPA did not discover the violation until after the spill, Shimmin said, because with an estimated 65,000 companies in its jurisdiction and the manpower to perform only about 60 inspections a year, her office had not inspected Shell or reviewed its plan since 1984.

"Even a routine inspection of such a facility would not necessarily

be tested for chemical contamination and then released only manually into waterways.

R.J. Banducci, manager of Shell's manufacturing complex, admitted that "the accident was fairly preventable had that levee or dike valve been closed."

The tank has a drain on top, with a pipe running through the tank and discharging what should be only rain water into a moat around the tank. A Shell worker is supposed to visually inspect the water in the moat to make sure it is not contaminated with oil before opening the valve. The valve releases the water into the marsh.

## Fine undetermined as cleanup continues

MARTINEZ — Oil cleanup continued Wednesday along the marshes and shores in the Carquinez Strait.

Crews concentrated on Peyton Slough, the marshland near the Shell Oil refinery, Martinez Regional Shoreline Park and Benicia, said U.S. Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Bob Brach.

The latest count on the mixture of oil, water, mud and debris sucked up by vacuum trucks is 714,000 gallons,

Brach said. It isn't yet known how much of that mixture is oil.

State and federal regulators will fine Shell based on the amount of oil left unrecovered. The oil company says it spilled about 176,400 gallons, but other estimates place it as high as 300,000 gallons.

As of Wednesday, 342 birds have been rescued, 112 have died; 26 mammals have been rescued, 38 have died.

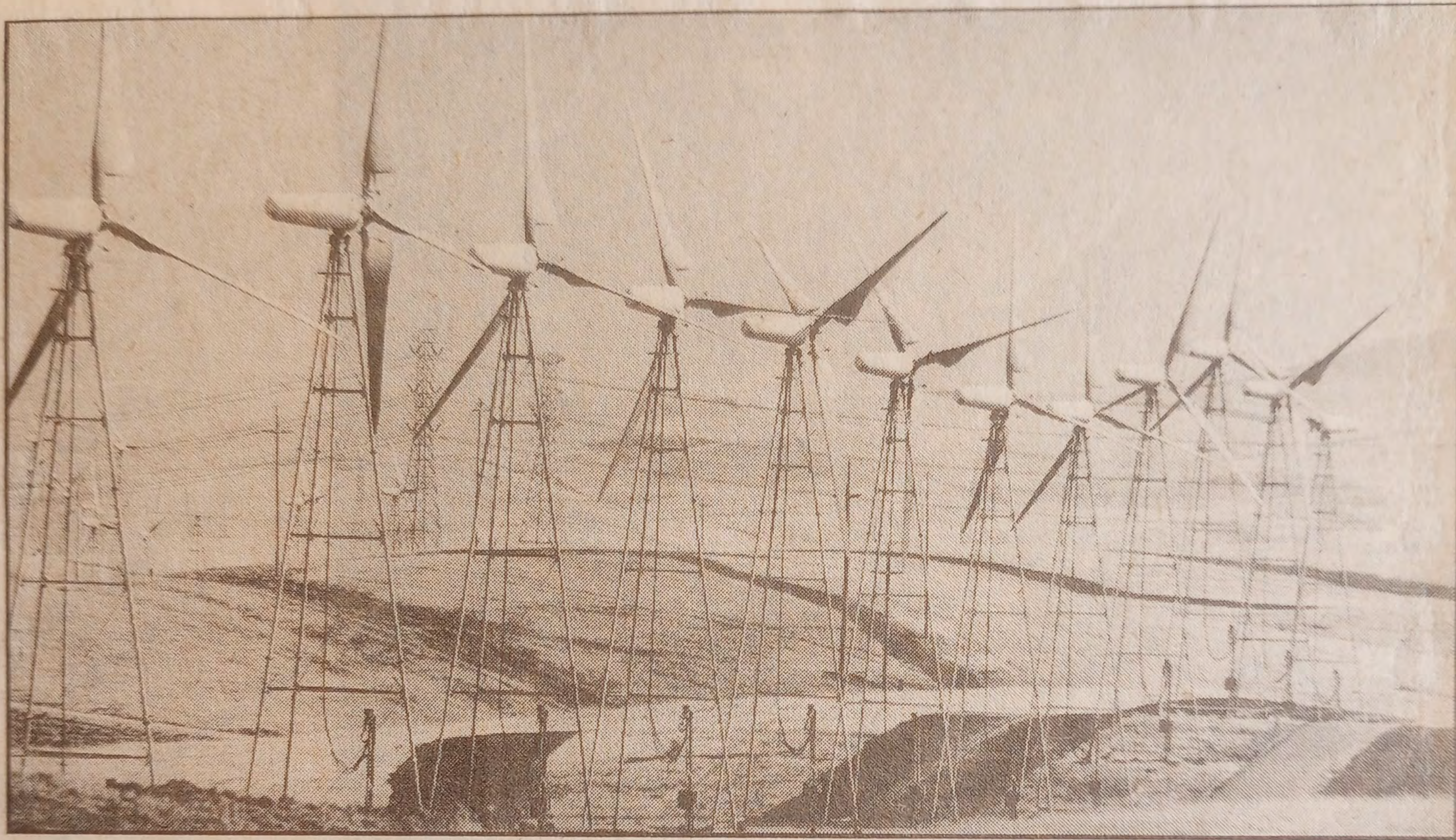


existing development services and facilities in old areas are not hurt growth. Existing defunct roads and public services corrected with developer other funds.

vices and facilities operate at certain levels or a funding mechanism is set up to pay for the improvements.

After a confusing and lengthy debate, the congress voted 26-21 for Draper's amended proposal.

Three co-authors of the original



Times photo

**THE EFFECTS OF WINDMILLS** on birds will be examined in a state-funded study.

## Three counties join forces to see how windmills affect birds of prey

**MARTINEZ** — The effects of windmills on eagles, hawks and other birds of prey will be examined in a state-funded study involving Contra Costa, Alameda and Solano counties.

Contra Costa supervisors Tuesday authorized the county's participation in the study.

Community Development Director Harvey Bragdon said the study will determine if windmills are harmful to the birds and their habitat and, if so, what can be done to correct the problem.

Kent Fickett of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society said there is concern the birds are killed or injured when they collide with the wind machines and that their habitat is being destroyed by the road and oth-

er construction on wind farms.

Fickett said the Audubon Society is also concerned that power poles linked to the wind farm be properly designed so birds perching on the poles are not electrocuted.

The study is expected to cost \$134,600. The California Energy Commission will put up \$120,000 and Contra Costa, Alameda and Solano counties will contribute the rest in staff time.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state Department of Fish and Game and Pacific Gas and Electric Co. have agreed to provide in-kind services for the study, Bragdon said.





Times/Eric Rahkonen

**THE SHELL SPILL** cleanup effort is continuing. Here pollution control specialist Gary Cameron is shown dragging absorbent pads through contaminated marsh in May.

## Marsh may be drained soon

### 'Nearly oil-free' water to run into strait

By Anne Burke

Staff writer

MARTINEZ — Cleanup crews may begin draining contaminated marshlands at the site of the Shell Oil spill early next week, the U.S. Coast Guard says.

Coast Guard Lt. Steve Boyle said workers will pump water from a 100-acre marsh into Peyton Slough, where it will drain into the Carquinez Strait.

The Coast Guard, which is overseeing cleanup at the site of the massive spill, wants to drain the area so that oil on the marsh bed can be scraped off or plowed under.

The marsh, which typically dries up during summer months, will be reflooded after the bottom is cleaned, Boyle said.

Water that drains into the strait should be nearly oil-free because it will be pumped from the lower depths of the marsh, Boyle said.

Kent Fickett, an environmentalist and oil spill watchdog, criticized federal and state agencies for failing to notify the Contra Costa County Fish and Wildlife Committee of the draining plans. Fickett is a member of the committee.

The agencies will be "making a big mistake if they go forward with any kind of action before getting our review," he said.

Committee members last month told agencies in-

volved in the cleanup that they wanted to be notified of plans ahead of time.

About 365,000 gallons of heavy, gooey crude oil leaked from a broken pipe at the Shell Oil refinery in Martinez on April 23, clogging the environmentally sensitive marsh and miles of coastline along the San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary.

Boyle says the oil hasn't sunk to the bottom, although some contamination of the marsh floor occurred during low water levels.

Fishing industry representatives, including Bill Kier, a state legislative consultant on salmon and steelhead fishing, have claimed that the oil forms "tar globs" and sinks to the bottom, where it releases toxics to plants and organisms.

Shell faces penalties of up to \$7.3 million from the state Regional Water Quality Control Board as well as a lawsuit, expected to be filed by several state and federal agencies, to recover damages.

Workers armed with absorbent pads continue to remove oil patches in the marsh, although cleanup efforts in shoreline areas are winding down, Boyle said.

"The oil on rocks has solidified to the point where it's almost part of the stone," Boyle said. "It won't come off in your hands and it would take high-pressure water to blast it off."



# No dump at Marsh Creek •

By asserting the stand of environmentalists in opposing use of a proposed Marsh Creek area dump site is a "sham," Pittsburg Councilman Ronald Currie missed the point.

The facts are the Board of Supervisors selected a broadly based, civic-minded, group of people from all sections of the county to look at 13 different sites as possible locations for the county's solid waste disposal.

The diverse group, which had a small number of so-called environmentalists as a part of its makeup, spent months reviewing possible sites. The list finally produced (after months of meetings, study and discussion) and sent to the Board of Supervisors listed the 13 sites from the most to the least desirable.

For the edification of Currie, the list was headed by Bay Point. It was seen as the site that would cause the least environmental damage, cost the least, would last for the term of years required. Round Valley (Marsh Canyon) was dead last on the list of 13 possible sites.

Round Valley has rightfully been called the Yosemite of Contra Costa County. It is an area much needed for park-open space, not for just today but for the future when everything else in the county is developed, filled or in some human use.

As long as we continue to create trash, we have to be agreeable to putting it someplace. The Audubon

Society is doing no more than supporting the thoughtful work and result of the long, tedious study of the blue ribbon task force. Marsh Canyon should not be selected as a site for future disposal of the county's solid waste.

A.B. McNabney

E.C. James 10/5/88 Mt. Diablo Audubon Society  
Walnut Creek





Times/Kathy Baker

**MARCHETA BOWDLE**, far right, of Walnut Creek points out a bird at Howe Homestead Park in Walnut Creek while Richard Dibble of Richmond tries to identify it during the Audobon Society's annual bird count this weekend.



## Local birders beat bushes in annual count

By Vic Vogler

Staff writer

CONCORD — Richard Dibble thought his Audobon Society colleagues were joking when they said they had spotted a snipe.

In a traditional snipe hunt, a neophyte hunter searches for something that doesn't exist. Dibble laughed, but his fellow "birders," as they call themselves, were serious.

"The old Boy Scouts used to go out fictionally hunting for them," says Marguerite Gross, an eight-year Audobon member. "But there is a snipe."

Throughout Saturday, members of the Mt. Diablo Audobon Society counted snipe and any other species of bird they could find as part of the worldwide 89th annual Christmas bird count. The data collected will measure changes in population and habitat to see how well the birds are doing.

A count about 10 years ago, for example, revealed

that peregrine falcons were nearly extinct, Gross said. Since then, their numbers have grown through controlled breeding.

A group of seven "birders" led by Society President Barbara Vaughn trudged through the muddy ponds and canals of Walnut Creek and Concord on Saturday morning in search of rare and common species. Nine other groups also braved temperatures in the 40s to comb the area.

By 10:30 a.m., Vaughn and her fellow birders had counted 36 species out of the 50 the group expected to see. The rare species included a sora rail, a Barrow's goldeneye and a Thayer's gull.

Countywide, 153 species of bird were counted, society member Maury Stern said Sunday. Several were of a type not usually seen here, including the hooded oriole, the white-winged scoter and the semi-palmated plover.

The society counts in the winter because migrated

birds have stable populations, Gross said. The data they yield is therefore more reliable.

And the weather is therefore more frigid.

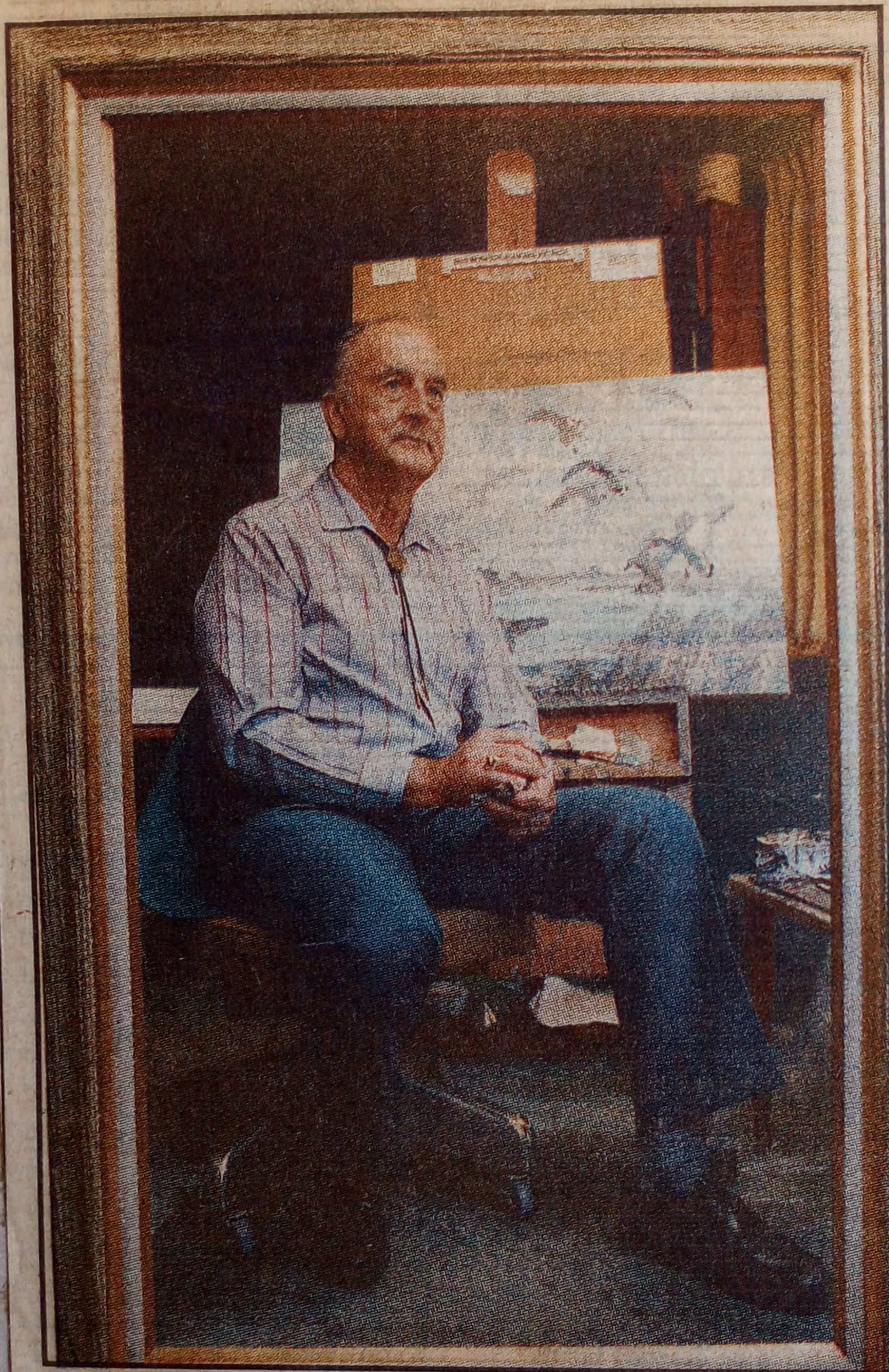
"Golfers and skiers are as crazy as birders," said Gross, a Napa-Solano Audobon member. She downplayed the cold, comparing the thrill of spotting the first bird to skiing. "After you make that first run, (it's) great."

Dibble, a newcomer, finally was convinced that snipes exist. He missed the one pointed out to him but enjoyed the species he saw.

"I've always fed the birds in my back yard and always enjoyed looking at birds," said Dibble, a retired pipe-fitter for Chevron.

For anyone who still disputes the snipe's existence, the Encyclopedia Americana offers the following: "Snipes are mostly streaked brown, black, or buff. . . . They use their long bills, which are slightly innervated at the tip, in probing for worms in soft mud."





Times/Bob Pepping

**HE'S NOT A HUNTER**, but Larry Adamson's bag is birds. A painting by the Lafayette resident is going on a state stamp.

# Lafayette artist paints state wildlife collector's stamp

By Peggy Sotcher

Staff writer

LAFAYETTE — Like the peregrine falcon in his latest work, painter Harry Adamson is alert and patient waiting for his prey. When he spots it, Adamson rivets his eyes and watches.

The movement of birds is the essence of his life work.

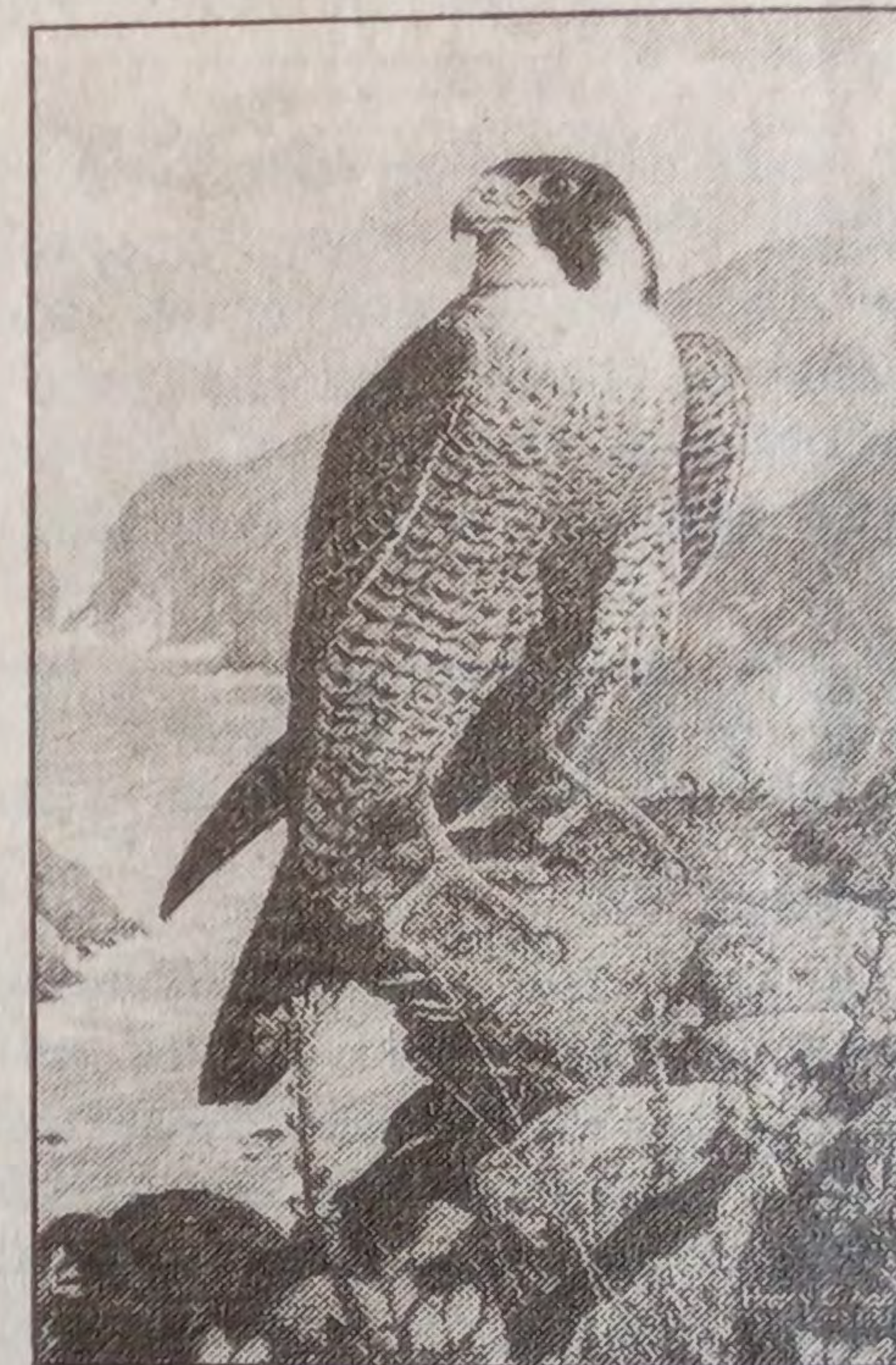
A noted wildlife artist, Adamson's realistic oil paintings hang in galleries and dens around the world. Down to the stump on the back of a duck's webbed foot, his paintings are detailed and precise.

His falcon is the subject of the state's first native species collector's stamp. It will be sold for \$7.50 by the Department of Fish and Game to raise money for wildlife habitat management.

"He's one of the top outdoor artists in the country," said Ted Thomas, public information officer for Fish and Game. "That's why we chose him."

Posters, cards and the original painting will also be sold. "Maybe even T-shirts," Adamson says. "Makes me cringe a bit. Talk about prostituting your art."

Henry Curieux Adamson, 72, has made most of his living off paintings of ducks, but sometimes likes a change. "I was happy to get the chance to paint a falcon,"



The native species stamp of a peregrine falcon can be ordered by calling (800) 843-9453 or (800) THE-WILD. The cost is \$8, including handling and postage. They also will be available for \$7.50 in mid-February where hunting and fishing licenses are sold and at the state's new wildlife view areas.

he said from his studio, a back bedroom of his Lafayette home. "When you've been painting Cali-

Please see **STAMP**, Page 2A



# STAMP: Lafayette man paints peregrine falcon

From Page 1A

California ducks for 50 years, it's nice to paint something different."

The thick, creamy smell of oil paint lingers in his green studio. Adamson keeps the room tidy: prints to be signed on the desk, frames leaning against one wall, finished paintings all around.

Adamson has painted falcons before. An unfinished South American orange-breasted falcon sits in the corner of his studio. A painting of an Arctic gyrfalcon hangs in his dining room.

He once tried painting an antelope in the Nevada desert. About half way through, he took it to his mentor, Paul Fair. He never finished.

A harsh critic, Fair urged Adamson in the late 1930s to stick with waterfowl. He also encouraged him to move from pen-and-ink drawings into oils.

"He really tore into my drawings at first. But four years later, I brought him one and he couldn't find anything wrong with it."

Fair helped him sell his drawings through a New York gallery for \$5 each. That's when Adamson became convinced he could make it as a professional artist.

His wife, Betty, calls him the original hippie. He painted because he wanted to. Her work as an administrative analyst paid the mort-

gage.

Adamson relies on his bird-watching excursions, not photographs or other drawings, to shape his paintings. A camera lens and fast shutter can freeze the bird in contortions humans don't see, Adamson said.

Instead, he takes mental photographs of birds, noting everything from the arc of their neck to the way their body reflects on the water.

Adamson sometimes watches birds so intensely he gets subconscious visions of his next painting more brilliantly than he can create in waking hours.

"I love the violent drive of ducks taking off" from a marsh, he says. Hunters, however, like to see ducks landing, the best position for a clean kill. Most of his paintings are of ducks landing. "Hunters are my best customers," he says.

Adamson tried hunting once. Although he once was an Army sharpshooter, he didn't hit anything and put down the gun.

He says he's happier as a conservationist and birdwatcher who records the beauty of feathered creatures on canvas.

"Being a wildlife artist is a very pleasant way to starve to death," Adamson says. "Someone told me once, don't worry, your career will snowball. Believe me, it was a slow snowball."



C. C. Jones 2/28/89

# Flood channel an angler's paradise

By Jon Bashor

Staff writer

As cars and trucks roar by on Interstate 680 behind him, Jim Andersen skillfully works his arched fishing pole to reel in the struggling steelhead.

Andersen, who's been fishing for salmon and steelhead in the Walnut Creek flood control channel for 10 years, holds the fish in the shallow water as he gently removes the hook from its mouth. Then he holds it up — a shimmering 2-foot, 4-pound steelhead. Then he lets it go.

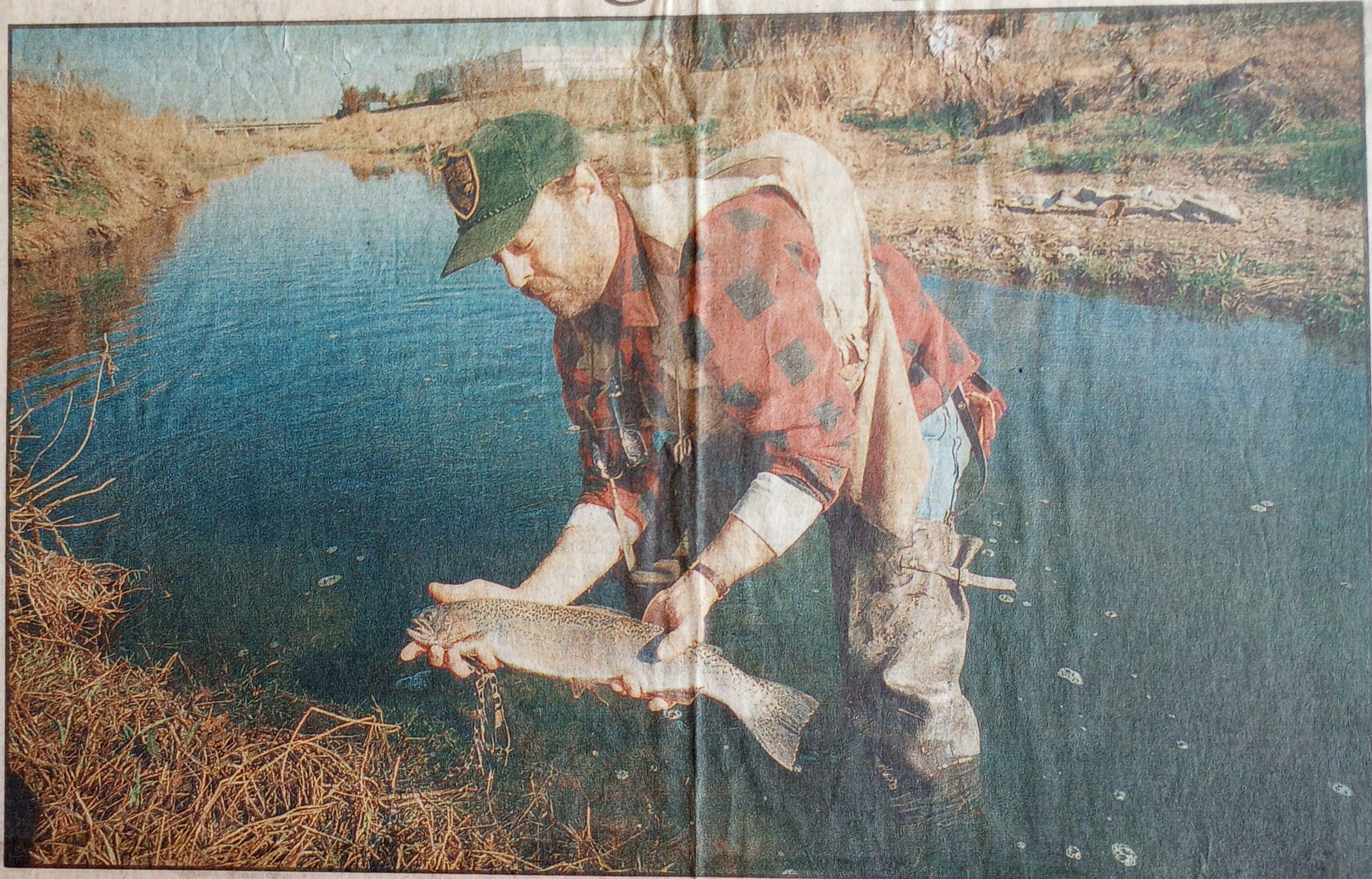
"Guys go to Alaska and British Columbia to catch these fish," said Andersen, who lives in Pleasanton. "We've got them in our back yard."

From the bank, overlooking the stream and nearby warehouses, Mike Bryant nods in approval, though the steelhead pales in comparison to the 33-pound salmon he pulled from the ditch a month ago. Along with Pleasant Hill Mayor Terri Williamson, he watches the freed fish move off through the clear green water.

"Catching them is a great thrill," said Andersen, "but letting them go is about twice as much a rush."

This week, Williamson plans to apply for a state grant to study the stream and find ways to improve it as a spawning ground for the big fish. The city of Pleasant Hill would administer the grant, which Concord and Walnut Creek support, Williamson said.

Please see **FISH**, Page 2A



**JIM ANDERSEN OF PLEASANTON** holds a steelhead he caught in the Walnut Creek flood control channel.

Times/Jon McNally



# FISH: Angling paradise along I-680

From Page 1A

Bryant and Andersen are among dozens of anglers who regularly walk past no-trespassing signs to reach the channel, where more than a dozen streams converge as they flow into the Carquinez Strait. Spawning salmon and steelhead, carp, suckers, catfish and sunfish share the stream with abandoned shopping carts and box springs. Muskrats, mallards and egrets appear in the stretch of water lined with tules and cattails.

"I caught a bicycle last year," said Bryant, who lives in Walnut Creek and regularly takes time off from his job in Richmond to fish the stream.

The state Department of Water Resources awards \$1 million a year in stream restoration grants. Williamson is asking for \$30,000.

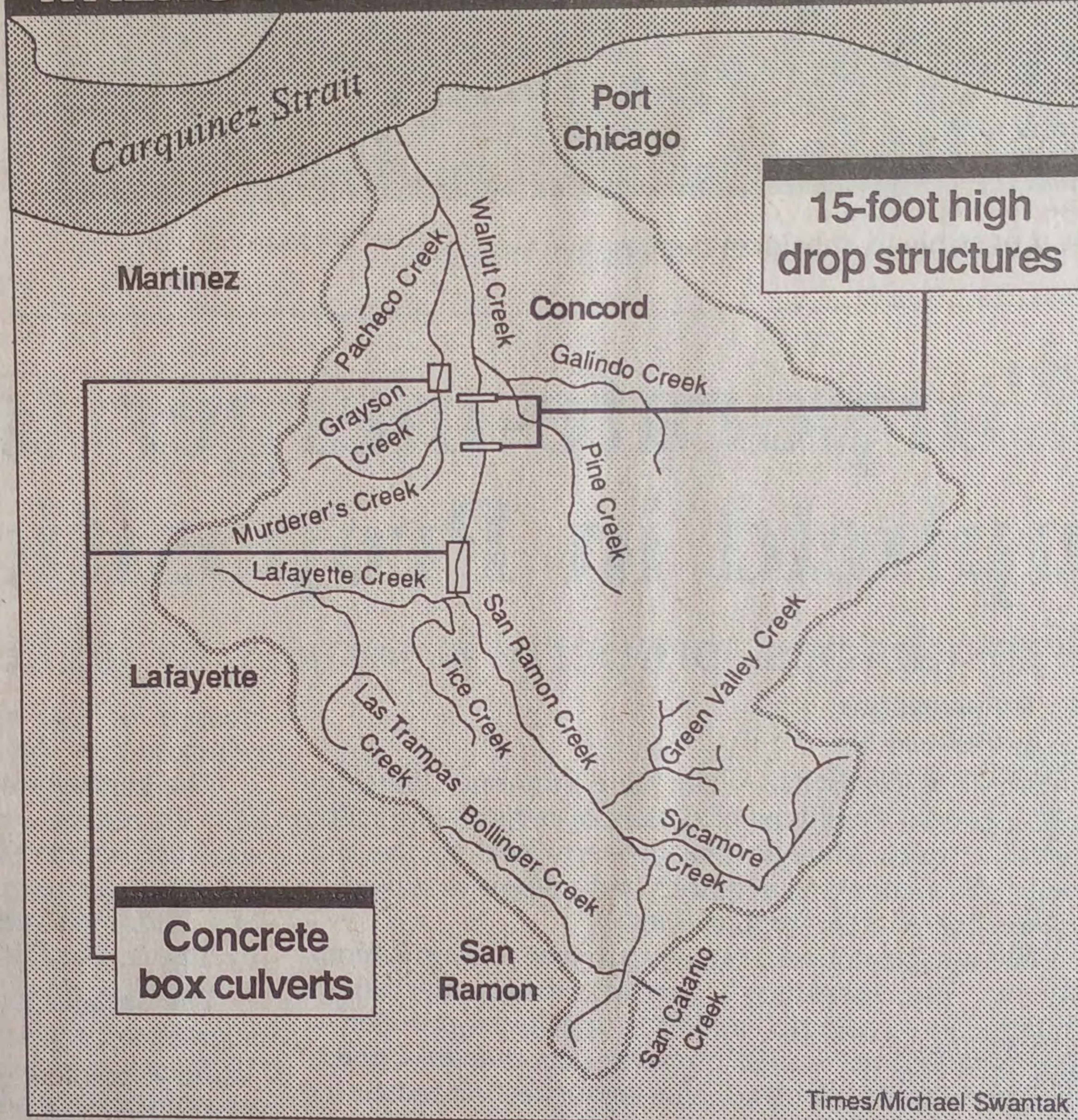
In addition to the grant, Williamson is counting on a state law passed last year that calls for residents and public agencies to work to double the number of naturally spawning salmon and steelhead.

"We know they're here, we know they're spawning," said Williamson. "We need to determine how we can improve this for the salmon."

The female fish need cool, clear water with a gravel stream bed to lay their eggs, which the males then fertilize. But dredging, silt from construction and regular removal of trees from the channel eliminate those conditions, Williamson said.

Two concrete flood control barriers

## WALNUT CREEK BASIN



ers also frustrate the fish, which sometimes can be seen trying to leap the 15-foot dams.

Williamson, an avid salmon angler who is working on her master's degree in biology, said she would like to see salmon return to the creeks flowing into the flood control channel. Those creeks reach into

San Ramon, Concord, Lafayette, Walnut Creek and Pleasant Hill.

Sam McGinnis, a biology professor and author of "Freshwater Fishes of California," would lead the state-financed study. He has helped bring steelhead back to two creeks in San Mateo County. Williamson and other students would help with

the research as part of their studies.

Focusing attention on the stream could help stop poachers, like those he has seen using guns, nets and pitchforks, Andersen said.

The Audubon Society, Diablo Valley Fly Fishing Association, Cal Trout and United Anglers are interested in co-sponsoring the grant, Williamson said. Bryant said he is starting a chapter of the Pacific Northwest Steelhead Association, which helped restore Carmel Creek.

The channel's priority is flood control, said Bud Murphy of the county flood control district, but his agency is interested in discussing other uses.

The channel was built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and is administered by the county, Murphy said. A new program to build recreation areas in some flood control areas means there is a strong possibility that federal money is available for improvements, Murphy said. "I think it could be a wonderful addition to the community," Murphy said.

Bryant, who's given fishing priority over his marriage, said he'd even give up his job to achieve his dream of making the channel a viable fishery.

The annual run of fish in the channel, estimated at 2,000 salmon and 1,000 steelhead, swims into high gear when rains raise the canal's water level.

"I can't sleep nights when it's raining, knowing there are going to be fish out here the next day," said Bryant, 36.