

At the Intersection of the Natural World and Techno-World

by Phil Dussel, Board Member 9/2023

On any given day, walking the Klamath Wingwatcher's Trail is truly a unique recreational and educational experience. Some say even spiritual if time allows for introspection along the way. In such a dynamic place, where the complex interaction of layers of life is so lush, life flourishes. On your walk consider: the Trail that rings the still waters of the wetlands stretches for over two miles; birds, even eagles on the spire-like snag, could be watching you; peaceful benches invite quiet contemplation. One could say technology in any form would be in stark contrast, would be an intruder to the wetlands world, so what difference could technology possibly make in a world like that?

Short answer: a unique application of renewable energy—a solar-powered water pump used to enhance the wetlands. Here's a quick look at what technology hath wrought:

Dave Potter (board member, former National Wildlife Refuges manager) favors active human influence on water levels because "...mimicking Mother Nature's management was superior wetland ecosystem management. The more the diverse the life forms, the more stable the ecosystem, a basic ecological principle." Which is why..." varying water depths up and down (is) so beneficial. ... The food chain is greatly improved."

In addition, water level fluctuations impact the life cycle of insects, worms and snails that proliferate in warm shallow water mud flats, affecting the food chain all the way up to apex species. Birds of all types (84 species were identified by Elijah Hayes and Kevin Spencer between 7:00am and noon one day in May, 2022) feast on bugs like this one:

For Bill Wood (WingWatcher's board member, BOR civil engineering technician ((ret)), that's where all the action is. Pond water level is a key component of the ecosystem and readily-observed indicator of overall habitat health. For a long time, a water pump, any kind of pump had been on Bill's wish list. So at long last, when the solar water pump was deployed in the South Pond in September, Bill was very encouraged, now having a tool to better manage the South Pond. Maintaining optimum water level is critical for the South Pond in many ways. After a wet winter there may even be too much water in South Pond, threatening the integrity of the dike system along the shore. The solar-powered pump has proven to be quiet and effective, unlike the usual incessant drone of a standard commercial pump. Ho hum, just another gizmo using the power of the sun!

