



Fact Sheet

Habitat Preservation

Air Force Real Property Agency, McClellan

No. 3 - 01

March 2003

Former McClellan Air Force Base is home to a variety of plants and animals living in natural habitat areas located around the base. The areas include vernal pools, wetlands, creeks and a pond. The Air Force is helping to preserve and protect these areas and the species that live there.

The Air Force is currently consulting with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service about the future of the habitat after the land is transferred to Sacramento County. Two areas on McClellan have been proposed to be maintained as open space conservation areas, one on the west side and the other at the north end of the air field.

Vernal Pools



vernal pool

Vernal pools are a type of seasonal wetland that occurs in grassy areas in low spots in the ground. The low spots hold water because a layer of hard clay or minerals prevents the water from soaking into the ground. Rainwater fills the low spots during the winter months, and then slowly evaporates. The pools may hold water for days, weeks or months, depending on the amount of rainfall, air temperature and the size of the pool. The size of the pools are anywhere from a few square yards to as big as two acres.

On McClellan, there are many vernal pools, found primarily in the western area and around the runway. Also, a large group of pools are located in the northwest portion of McClellan. Vernal pools provide habitat for many native plants and animals. A few examples of wildflowers that are common in the vernal pools include white meadowfoam, two-colored lupine and fiddleneck. Animals may include killdeer, great blue herons, leeches and water fleas.

Creeks and Ponds



Beaver Pond

Two main creeks flow through the western part of the former base, Magpie Creek and Don Julio Creek. The creeks create wetland habitat, mostly on the western part of McClellan. Combined, the two creeks create more than 4 acres of habitat for aquatic and wetland plants and animals.

Beaver Pond, located near Don Julio Creek on the western side of the former base, also provides more than two acres of wetland habitat for many plants and animals, such as nesting birds, ducks, geese, fish and beavers. The Air Force created the pond to help control the additional water flow into the creeks created by the groundwater treatment plant. Water flowing into the creeks and Beaver Pond is regulated to protect the natural habitat, ensuring that there is enough water flow into the creeks during dry seasons, and limiting the flow during wet seasons. When the pond was built, the Air Force planted native vegetation around the pond, creating a natural habitat for wildlife.

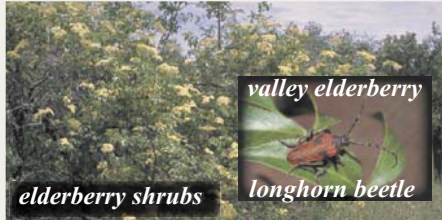
Protected Species



vernal pool fairy shrimp



giant garter snake



elderberry shrubs

valley elderberry

longhorn beetle

Vernal pool fairy shrimp have been found in the vernal pools at McClellan. The shrimp spend the summer as shelled embryos, or “resting eggs,” in the soil at the bottom of the pools. The eggs hatch when the pools fill with rainwater in the winter. The vernal pool fairy shrimp develop very quickly into adults and drop their eggs to the bottom of the pools before the pools dry again in the spring and summer.

The creeks and wetlands on McClellan also provide a home for the giant garter snake. This snake spends the winter in underground burrows, emerging for the summer in late April or early May.

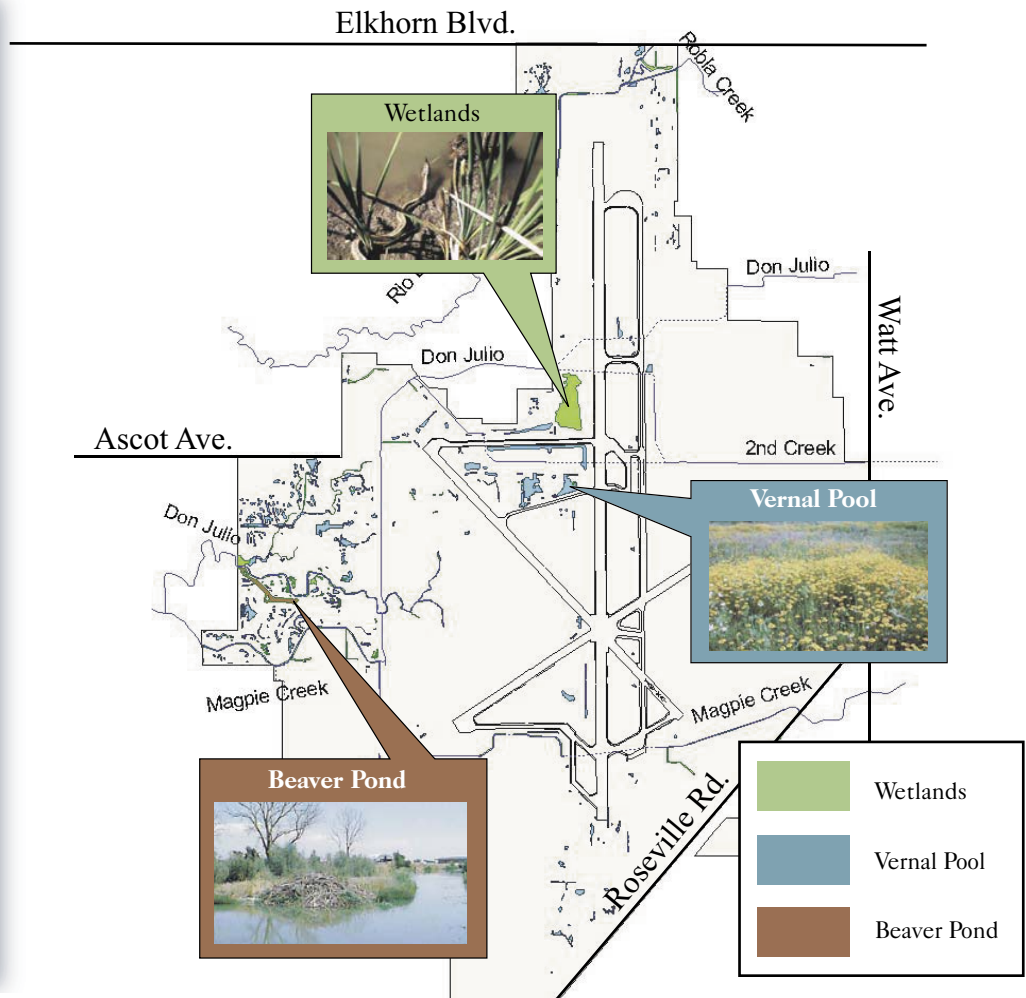
A stand of *elderberry shrubs* is located near Don Julio Creek on the western side of the former base. These shrubs are the host plant of the *valley elderberry longhorn beetle*. The beetles spend most of their lives in the larval stage, living within the stems of elderberry plants and feeding on the interior wood. When the adult beetle emerges from the wood, it leaves a small oval opening in the stem of the plant, which is often the only evidence that the species is present. Adult beetles emerge in April or May, and the females lay their eggs in the crevices in the bark in June. When the eggs hatch, the larvae tunnel into the tree and remain there for one to two years before emerging again as an adult.

Sesbania

Sesbania is a tree or small shrub that is a non-native to the Sacramento Valley, and is spreading through creek and wetland habitats, displacing native species. Sesbania, also called “rattlebox,” has compound leaves and showy coral or red flowers. The seeds are contained in winged, oblong pods with pointed tips. To help stop the spread of this species on McClellan, the seed pods are collected and thrown away so they cannot germinate.



NOTE *Sesbania* seeds are POISONOUS - gloves are worn when removing the seed pods



Air Force Real Property Agency (AFRPA)

Dawn Young, McClellan Community Relations
(916) 643-1742, Ext. 233

Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC)

Patricia Ryan, Public Participation Specialist
(916) 255-2615

United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S.EPA)

David Cooper, Community Involvement Coordinator
(415) 972-3237; (800) 231-3075