When we think about the beauty of the Delta, its rich history, bountiful wildlife, and peaceful, glowing sunsets come easily to mind, but there is yet another kind of beauty to be found here. Peppered throughout the Delta are many beautiful murals showcasing everything from the region’s historic buildings and landmarks to its modern contributions to the diverse population of California.

In recent years, downtown Stockton has become the home of several beautiful murals commemorating the city’s history and...Continued on page 2
A psychedelic image painted by Carlos Marquez drawing inspiration from the traditional art of Mexico decorates the city’s Mexican Heritage Center at 111 S. Sutter St., and just down the road at 20 N. Sutter St., Anthony Padilla’s “Musical Legacy of Dave Brubeck” pays tribute to the jazz legend who got his start at the University of the Pacific. Highlighting the strong sense of hope and community held by the Stockton community, “Plant the Seed,” a symbolic image by Kia Duras-Carter, can be found at 216 N. California Street. “Basant (Spring),” a pastel-colored image by Sunroop Kaur of a masked man and woman reaching out to each other in front of a backdrop of blooming flowers and Indian architectural arches, is painted on the side of a building at 734 E. Main St. About the mural, which she painted as part of California’s “Your Actions Save Lives” campaign to encourage COVID-19 safety protocols, Kaur says that the flowers represent “the blooming after a long winter,” and that the two figures show the “universal longing that we felt for our loved ones where…we want to be close to them. We want to be near them, but we can’t.”

Of course, no conversation about visual art in the Delta would be complete without mention of Marty Stanley. Having grown up in Isleton since the age of 3, Stanley graduated from Rio Vista High School in 1973 and soon after set up his first art studio in a café in Isleton’s Chinese Historic District. He went on to become the owner of the Levee Gallery in Walnut Grove, where he displayed many of his vividly painted local landscapes. Not to be limited to just galleries, however, he painted the Walnut Grove mural, “Boon Dox Botel” on River Road. This mural shows a lush riverside scene with boats tied up alongside a restored version of the Walnut Grove Hotel, which was built in 1868. Another mural painted by Stanley, “Mt. Diablo Sunset,” can be found just outside the Delta region in midtown Sacramento at 2220 J Street. (Pictured below)

Elsewhere in the Delta, a mural by Javier Rocabado honoring our nation’s veterans can be seen at the Antioch Veterans Memorial near the Antioch Marina, and a very photographable mural by Lorin Baeta that stands at 225 Oak St. in Brentwood incorporates multiple sets of butterfly, dragonfly, and bird wings with images of local agricultural products taking the place of the usual feathers and spots.

Indeed, to find beauty in the Delta, you don’t need to make your way out to its fields and waterways; even on the streets in towns and city centers, all you need to do is look around you!

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**View the Murals and Learn More About the Artists**

Stockton Murals
www.visitstockton.org/stockton-art-trail

Sacramento and Walnut Grove Murals
www.martystanley.com/california-delta

Brentwood Mural
www.eastbaytimes.com/2020/11/15/around-east-county-new-downtown-brentwood-mural-completed

Antioch Mural
www.javierarts.com/veterans-memorial
Gold Mines and Golden Fields

Early Delta Agriculture from the Gold Rush Through the 1800s

While the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is now known for its fertile soil and ample water, settlers in the mid-1800s didn't venture into the area searching for farmland. They were searching for something else in the rich layers of dirt... gold! The population of the region exploded during the California Gold Rush in 1849. The Gold Rush had a significant impact on the Delta in many ways. Notably, the demand for food increased dramatically with more mouths to feed, and with that, people began to realize the potential for farming in the region. The population growth led to a new boom in agriculture, as early Delta farmers scrambled to meet that demand. These farmers often found more prosperity in the fields than in the mines.

One of the early agricultural pioneers of those days was Daniel Stuart, who arrived in 1860. He initially set up his farm on Grand Island, one of the 52 islands in the Delta region that have since been developed by both nature and reclamation. The Stuart farm prospered in growing wheat, barley, potatoes, and beans – common products of early Delta farming efforts. The farmers of this time used fire to clear the tules and had to break up the fibrous peat soil before planting - often near natural levees that were prone to flood events. Unfortunately, the Stuart farm was destroyed in 1862 during one such event. The Great Flood swept through the Delta region and submerged Grand Island. Stuart and his family were forced to start over, but they eventually rebuilt their farm and diversified their operations to include peaches, apricots, prunes, and grapes.

By the mid-1880s the Stuarts, together with an increasing number of farmers in the region, were growing 75,000 acres of wheat and barley. However, like the Stuarts, other farmers were also beginning to diversify their plantings as they learned that grains needed to be rotated with other crops to avoid plant diseases and maintain soil fertility. During this time, more orchards began to spring up with 6,000 acres of hearty pear trees being established by 1885.

The early Delta settlers faced many challenges, including floods, droughts, and pests. However, they persevered and continued to develop successful farming operations. By the end of the 1800s, the Delta became known for large-scale agriculture. Crops such as pear, tomato, and asparagus dominated the market as transportation and reclamation further developed at the start of the 1900s.

The beginning of the modern agricultural history of the Delta is a story of hard work, innovation, and resilience. The Delta region has long been an important part of California’s agricultural industry, and it continues to be a vital source of food for the state and the nation.
Duck, Duck, Goose

The abundance of waterfowl in the Delta provides opportunities for play, sport, and education for all.

The Delta is a premier location for waterfowl. Green-winged teals, American wigeons, Canadian geese, Northern pintails, Snow geese, mallards, and other species can all be found flocking to the region. For migrating waterfowl, the Delta is a key stop on the Pacific Flyway, who depend on it during the winter. The Pacific Flyway is one of the major flyways for migrating waterfowl, going from Alaska all the way to South America. Waterfowl come to our Delta in winter due to the mild temperatures and lush vegetation. They feed and store energy to fly to their breeding grounds in the spring. These birds migrate by the millions from as far away as Alaska, Patagonia, and even Siberia. The Sacramento Valley alone supports approximately 44 percent of wintering waterfowl using the Pacific Flyway, with more than 1.5 million ducks and 750,000 geese to its seasonal wetlands.
Our Delta wetlands shift with the seasons and have different opportunities unique to each one. Winter is bustling with birds and is the only time to see migrating birds. Spring is the breeding season for many native species, and the landscape is rich with plants in bloom. Summer offers a landscape change as plants begin to dry up in the heat, and birds are best viewed in the morning hours. Fall is the beginning of flood season for the wetlands, the most important part of their cycle that supports wildlife.

Wildlife preserves help protect habitat while providing ecological services and recreation to us. The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area supports an array of life including birds and waterfowl, and offers opportunities for bird watching, hunting, and recreation. Other areas for birding include the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge with its beautiful Blue Heron trail and the Cosumnes River Preserve. Hunting often goes hand in hand with wetland conservation, as hunters understand the importance of sustainability.

The California Duck Days Festival every April is a wonderful celebration of the importance the Delta has for waterfowl. The festival is organized by the Yolo Basin Foundation and its partners. The Foundation began in 1990 with a mission for community stewardship and appreciation for our wetlands and wildlife through outreach, education, and collaboration. Taking place in Yolo County in the heart of the Pacific Flyway, the festival has activities to learn about Delta duck species and appreciate them. Whether you are interested in bird watching, hunting, or conservation efforts, there is an opportunity to flock together in the Delta and enjoy the many types of waterfowl that grace the waterways.
Sunken boats and watercraft (known as abandoned and derelict vessels, or ADV) are both a navigation hazard and a pollution problem in the Delta. ADV (especially the parts of sunken vessels that are not visible at the water surface) create dangerous and costly problems for recreational boaters, and create water pollution when oil, fuel and other harmful components leak into the surrounding water.

Both recreational watercraft and commercial vessels, or working craft, can end up causing major issues in Delta waters. While California has programs through the California Department of Parks and Recreation Division of Boating and Waterways to facilitate the removal of recreational ADV, and even to prevent watercraft from becoming ADV, commercial ADV are a whole other matter.
Commercial ADV includes tugboats, barges, and former military craft that have been decommissioned and acquired by private parties. Often, these vessels are sold for a pittance and owners don’t have the means to maintain the vessels. In time, they become disabled and ultimately become a hazard to both navigation and water quality.

The California Legislature recognized the challenge posed by commercial ADV and passed 2011 legislation granting the State Lands Commission authority to declare certain vessels abandoned property and to take title and direct their disposition. Following a 2017 Delta-wide survey conducted by California Department of Fish and Wildlife and supported by the Delta Protection Commission, State Lands Commission prepared a plan for commercial ADV removal in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

In 2021, the Legislature allocated $12 million to the State Lands Commission for commercial ADV removal in the Delta. This program provides for field surveys to locate and assess the location of commercial ADV, prioritize the vessels for removal, and prepare environmental documentation to facilitate the removal of these identified vessels. The State Lands Commission expects to complete this survey work and environmental review over the next year, with the program continuing over a three-to-five-year period or until this funding is exhausted.

As a head start on these efforts, the State Lands Commission authorized the removal of two tugboats in October 2021. One of these, an abandoned WWII-era steel tugboat named Valiant that was on its way to sinking, broke free from its mooring this winter. After a perilous escort journey that started with the removal of 2,500 gallons of fuel and oil while the tugboat was still floating, the tugboat was towed to a dock at Mare Island. There, it was removed from the water and is now being scrapped. This success story needs to be repeated dozens of times before the Delta is rid of these hazards.

Senate Bill 1065, authored by Senator Susan Talamantes Eggman, would create a Commercial ADV Coordinating Council and create a fund for disposing of commercial ADV. The bill was endorsed by the Delta Protection Commission and the Delta Counties Coalition and is advancing through the Legislature.
Calendar

May

May 19 – Delta Protection Commission Meeting
www.delta.ca.gov/commission-meetings

May 21 – Locke Asian Spring Festival
www.locke-foundation.org

May 25 – Delta Conservancy Meeting
www.deltaconservancy.ca.gov/board-meeting-materials

May 26 – Delta Stewardship Council Meeting
www.deltacouncil.ca.gov/council-meetings

June

Jun 4-12 - California Invasive Species Action Week
www.wildlife.ca.gov/CISAW

June 23 – Delta Stewardship Council Meeting
www.deltacouncil.ca.gov/council-meetings