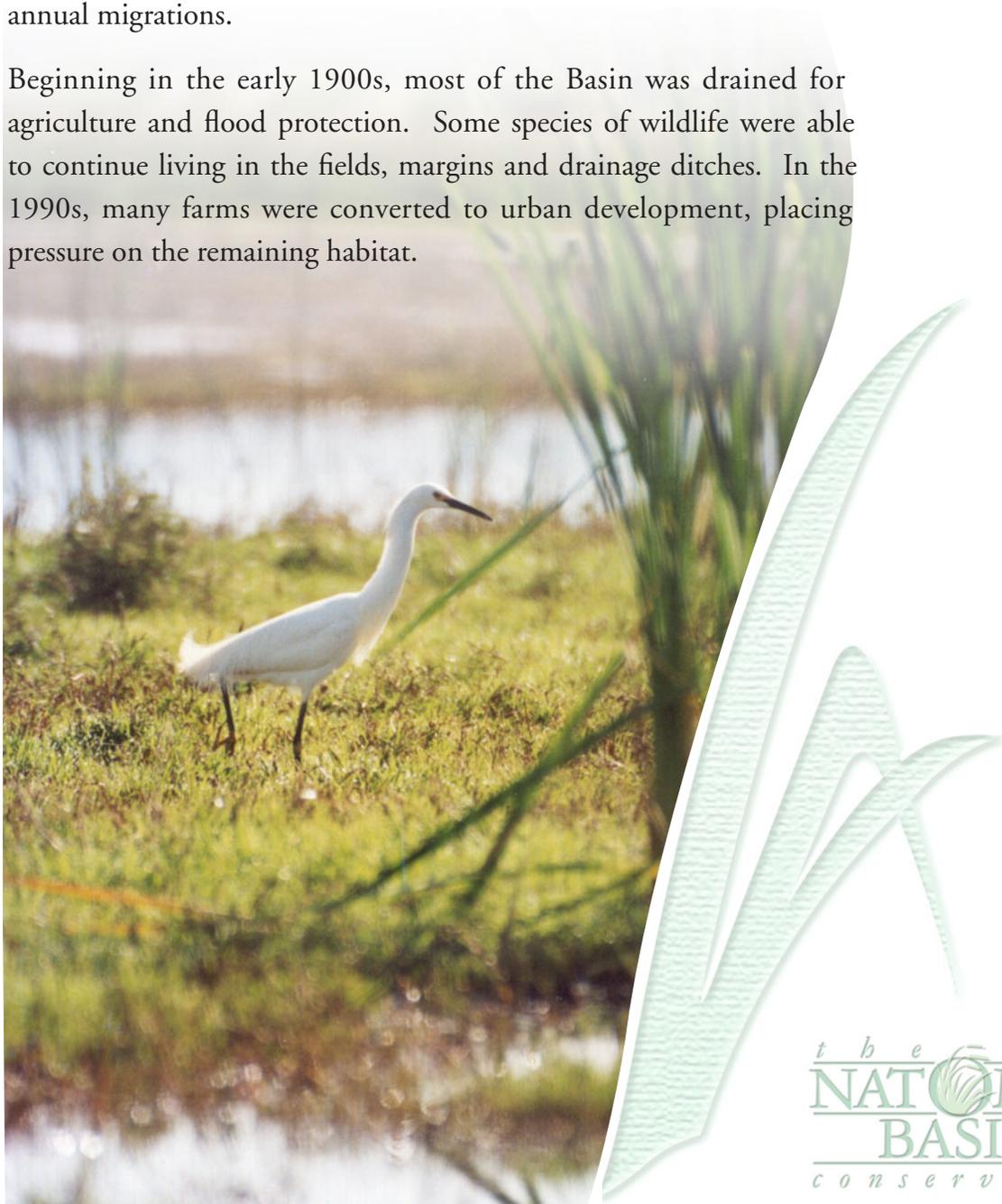


The Natomas Basin

The Natomas Basin, located in Northern California's Sacramento Valley, was once a mosaic of winding channels and verdant marshes bordered by floodplains, riparian woodlands and native grasslands. A variety of resident wildlife, from herons and egrets to jackrabbits, played their roles in the complex ecosystems. Countless waterfowl used the basin on their annual migrations.

Beginning in the early 1900s, most of the Basin was drained for agriculture and flood protection. Some species of wildlife were able to continue living in the fields, margins and drainage ditches. In the 1990s, many farms were converted to urban development, placing pressure on the remaining habitat.

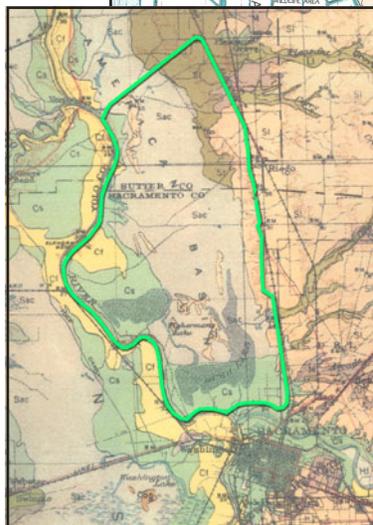
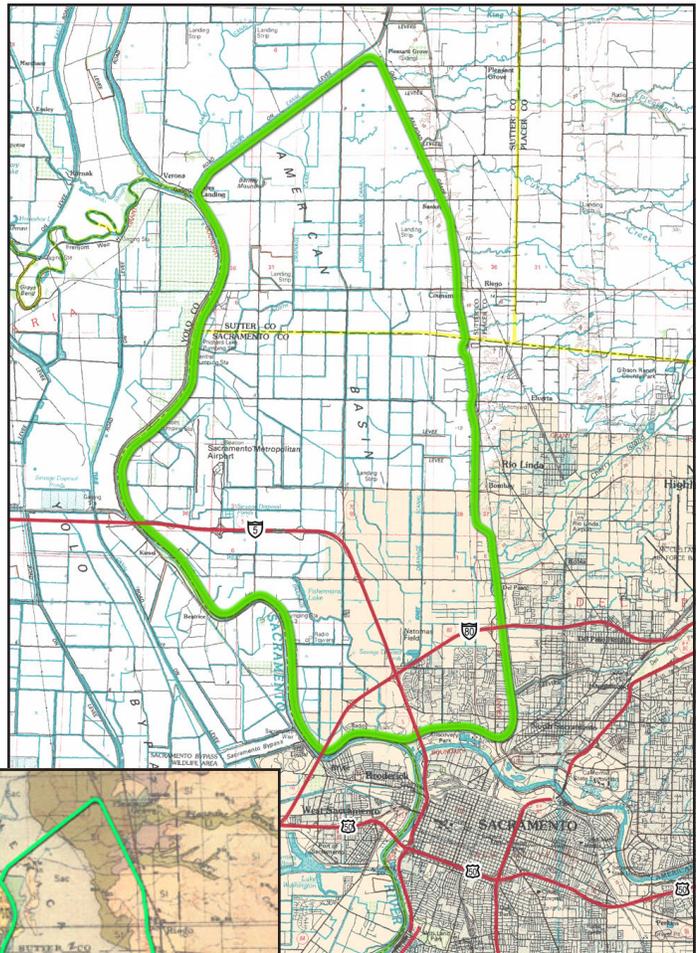


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The Natomas Basin became the focus of competing needs between wildlife habitat preservation, urban development, agriculture, and flood control. Creative public solutions were needed to resolve the conflict between habitat needs, agriculture and development. To facilitate orderly development of the Basin while preserving habitat for multiple species, a habitat conservation plan was proposed.

Right: Location of the Natomas Basin

Below: This soils map published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1915 shows that the land forms of the Natomas Basin were predominantly basins and low terraces. These are landscapes that naturally support marshes and floodplains.



adapted from USGS

The Habitat Conservation Plan

A decade-long habitat conservation planning process culminated in 1997 with approval of the Natomas Basin Habitat Conservation Plan (NBHCP) by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game. The NBHCP's goal is to promote a balance between biological conservation and economic development along with the continuation of agriculture within the Natomas Basin. To achieve this goal, the NBHCP established a multiple-species conservation program. It forecasts the expected impacts of urban development on species and habitats, and provides a plan by which those impacts can be mitigated.



*Left: the Swainson's hawk is one of the target species of the NBHCP
Top: An irrigation ditch bordering a Natomas Basin Conservancy preserve
Bottom: Urban development in the Natomas Basin continues to expand*

Q: How many acres of rice are grown in the Natomas Basin each year?

A: Nearly 20,000 acres

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The Natomas Basin Conservancy

The Natomas Basin Conservancy is a private, non-profit organization that began operating in December 1998. Its mission is to serve as “plan operator” of the NBHCP. It is guided by a Board of Directors appointed by the City of Sacramento.

The Conservancy receives mitigation fees paid by developers and others when permits are obtained to build within the Basin. The funds are used to acquire lands for habitat preserves, to design and construct wildlife reserves and sanctuaries, and to manage the lands.

The Conservancy’s land is designed to provide marsh, riparian, and grassland habitats. Rice fields that are specially managed to be wildlife-friendly are a significant part of the Conservancy’s preserves.



Photo provided by The Natomas Basin Conservancy

The “No Trespassing” sign proclaims these rice fields to be Natomas Basin Conservancy lands set aside as a special preserve and sanctuary for some of the NBHCP-covered species.



Top: Water is directed into newly constructed marsh habitat

Middle: A member of the land stewardship team records the elevation of water control structures

Bottom: Sandpipers and stilts utilize the new habitat

The Conservancy has acquired nearly 3,000 acres of mitigation land within the Natomas Basin. Habitat design and management plans have been developed, and habitat construction has already been completed on several Conservancy properties. Many species of wildlife have moved



into newly constructed habitat areas before the construction work was even finished.

These preserves benefit the species covered in the NBHCP's multiple species program by providing high-quality, protected habitat.

