



Dear Friends,

I'm sure you remember the magic of the first time you visited a park, went for a hike, or identified a bird, and how it affected your world view.

I am writing to you today to urge you to contribute to our school and public programs so our naturalists can continue to provide exciting Saturday programs and field trips for 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders who might never have this chance otherwise.

For us to continue our current level of programming we need your support. The global financial crisis is challenging for us all, and I ask you to remember that this is the generation of children who are growing up with the reality of global warming and unprecedented environmental challenges. What will it mean if our urban poor children have fewer and fewer opportunities to experience nature?

Whatever you can give will go directly to programming for 1200 children during the 2008–2009 school year and support for our 21 public programs:

\$1,500 sponsors field trips for three classes.

\$500 sponsors a field trip for one class.

\$100 provides books and materials for two classes.

Please give generously; your support is vital to educating and inspiring the next generation of environmental leaders. You may donate online at our website: www.sfnature.org. Thank you.

Best regards,

Nancy DeStefanis

Executive Director
San Francisco Nature Education

Our Public Programs Continue to Expand

We provide three Saturday Programs for the public: *Birding for Everyone* at the San Francisco Botanical Garden (first Saturday of every month), *Heron's Head Park* at Hunters Point (public tours on first Saturdays in January, February, and March) and *Heron Watch* at Stow Lake (six Saturdays in April and May). Our experienced and friendly naturalists lead 21 Saturday walks for adults and children!

Building a Better World for Tomorrow

We provide classroom-based science and environmental education to kindergarten through 5th grade students.

Our kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade students receive a classroom visit and introduction to birds, along with a field journal covering the most common San Francisco birds.

Our 3rd grade students receive an in-depth program of two classroom visits and three field trips: two to Golden Gate Park and one to Mercy High School for the annual Bird Calling Contest and poster presentations.

Our 4th and 5th grade students receive field trips to observe ocean and coastal birds in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. All our students are provided with a field journal and a pair of binoculars to observe and study San Francisco wildlife. Our program curriculum is aligned with the California Department of Education's science and language arts content standards.

"I'd like to be a bird; I would like to fly!"

—Michelle, 3rd grade student
Visitation Valley Elementary School

"San Francisco Nature Education provides a remarkable program that is engaging, meaningful and brought to the students by dedicated professionals."

—Mr. Dan Brady, 3rd grade teacher
Hillcrest Elementary School

We Rely on Your Support

Since the year 2000, San Francisco Nature Education has provided over 6,000 students in underserved public schools in San Francisco with classroom and field-based nature experiences. For the 2008–2009 school year, we need your financial support to teach 1,200 children in our school program and the 2,500 participants in our public programs.

Your gift provides the resources we urgently need to connect our community with the natural world.

Be sure to visit our newly updated website www.sfnature.org for our events calendar



Naturalist Sachi Jain, teacher Mr. Wong, and naturalist Andy Kleinhesselink with 3rd graders from Visitation Valley Elementary.

Photo: Nancy DeStefanis

and highlights of our 2008 School Programs, Bird Calling Contest, and Heron Watch.

Field Trip: SF Botanical Garden

Sachi Jain, SF Nature Naturalist

Our October 28th field trip brought Visitacion Valley Elementary School 3rd graders to the San Francisco Botanical Garden, an area rich in both plant and animal life. Followed by Channel 7 news reporters who documented our excursion, we headed toward the bamboo forest in the Asia area. Here the children participated in a popular tradition called the “alone walk,” in which each child walks through a short bamboo-lined path, listening and looking for birds.

We next ventured toward the Redwood Forest, where the redwood trees were studded with holes that had been drilled by Downy Woodpeckers. Among the dry bushes in the California area we heard and saw a bright blue bird with a white belly, which we identified as a Western Scrub Jay. A Red-Tailed Hawk swooped over our heads, settled down on a high branch, and surveyed its territory. Several Common Ravens flew overhead, calling raucously.

The Wildfowl Pond and the vegetation around it were brimming with bird life as well. Male Mallards, with their iridescent green necks ringed with white, swam with their mottled brown female counterparts. American Coots, which have black bodies and white bills, were



Taking field notes.

Photo: Nancy DeStefanis

mixed in with the Mallards. Canada Geese, one of the few grass-eating bird species, combed the greenery near the pond. The children in our group also spotted at least five red-eared slider turtles sunbathing on a rock.



Bird watching at the Botanical Garden.

Photo: Nancy DeStefanis

Our trip concluded with a group discussion about the types of birds we had seen, and each child drew a bird we had identified. The overwhelming majority of the students commented that their favorite part of the trip was the alone walk. Our hope is that these budding naturalists left the Botanical Garden with a greater appreciation of the natural world in the heart of the city.

Field Trip: Ocean Beach

Sachi Jain, SF Nature Naturalist



Student holds Red-Tailed Hawk flash card; teacher Mr. Weisskopf looks on.

Photo: Nancy DeStefanis

Students prepared for their field trip by making flashcards of ocean and coastal birds. Almost immediately upon arrival at the Sutro Baths parking lot above Ocean Beach, 5th graders from E.R. Taylor Elementary School were greeted by a

flock of Brown Pelicans gliding overhead. The sight of these waterfowl on our November 4th field trip marked the beginning of an exciting two-hour journey to locate birds in the ocean and surrounding forested trails.

Using our binoculars, we zeroed in on a Red-Tailed Hawk that hovered in suspended animation, simultaneously scanning the ground for its lunch and warding off attacks



Observing Brown Pelicans at Ocean Beach.

Photo: Nancy DeStefanis

from much smaller—yet quite hungry—Brewer’s Blackbirds. Western and California Gulls, common in nearly all areas of the city, flew in small groups over the ocean in search of fish.

Further down the hiking trail we caught a glimpse of a Burrowing Owl, perfectly camouflaged among a wall of rocks. We used a telescope to follow the movements of a Black Oystercatcher with its trademark orange bill, and we also observed a flock of Double-Breasted Cormorants drying their wings on a boulder. Three American Coots and a Ring-Necked Duck swam leisurely in a man-made pond near the trail, and a Great Egret stood waiting for a tasty morsel in the pond.



Burrowing Owl.

Photo: Bob Clements

As we entered the forested area of the trail, we heard the sweet liquid notes of a White-Crowned Sparrow. The children let out excited cries as two Anna's Hummingbirds zipped by, followed by a twittering Black Phoebe and several Red-Breasted Nuthatches hopping from branch to branch.

Toward the end of the trip, the students were able to identify several birds, such as the Black Phoebe and Red-Tailed Hawk, that made repeat

appearances throughout the day. At the end of the trip, each child went back to school with a pocket field guide to birds and their newfound knowledge of ocean bird species. The field trip was sponsored by GGNRA (Golden Gate National Recreation Area)/ Big Year (www.ggnrbigyear.org). All students will complete an action item on Brown Pelicans—one of many endangered species in the GGNRA.

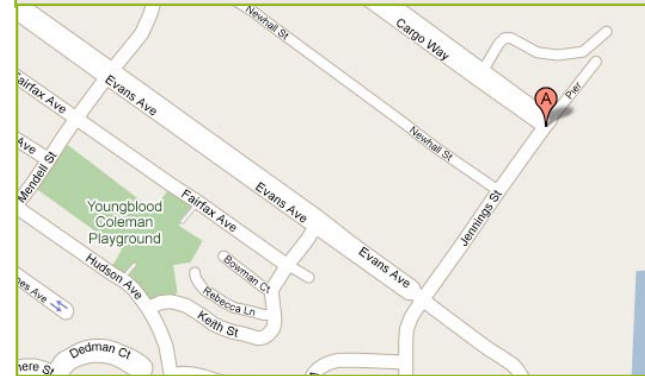


5th graders from ER Taylor at Ocean Beach accompanied by naturalist Tina Lui, holding spotting scope.

Upcoming Events

Birding for Everyone: Saturday, Dec. 6. Meet at 10 a.m. near the bookstore inside the main gate of the SF Botanical Garden in Golden Gate Park (MLK Drive near 9th Avenue & Lincoln).

Heron's Head Park: Public tours, 10 a.m.-noon at Jennings Street and Cargo, 2 blocks south of Pier 96. **Dates:** first Saturdays—January 3, February 7, and March 7, 2009.



Google Maps

Wish List

Used backpacks and used windbreakers for students to use on field trips.

Thank you for your support.



Contact us:
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