



## Executive Director's Corner Nancy DeStefanis

Dear Friends,

Spring has sprung! During March & April San Francisco Nature Education will be conducting classroom visits featuring real eggs and real nests of local birds for the children to look at, write about, and learn about. Using local bird artifacts helps to integrate what the children learn in the classroom with what they see in the field, showcasing the importance of conservation in a fun and interactive environment.

We show examples of real nests, including those of the Bushtit, American Robin, Anna's Hummingbird, and Mourning Dove. Our genuine eggs include those of tiny Anna's Hummingbird, a Great Egret, a Great Blue Heron, and a Canada Goose. The children also listen to and learn birdcalls of these species and others.

During April and May, the third graders will visit Stow Lake to see nesting birds, including Great Blue Herons and their chicks, Canada Geese, Brown Creepers, and many others.

These field trips are crucial to sparking a lasting interest in birds and conservation.

Best regards,

**Nancy DeStefanis**



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  - Heron Watch at Stow Lake
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## Stow Lake Heron Colony Report Nancy DeStefanis

The Great Blue Herons have returned to nest for the sixteenth year at Stow Lake. These charismatic birds now occupy four nests on the tiny island (now known as Heron Island) opposite the Stow Lake Boathouse. Come and see these phenomenal birds at our Heron Watch Program at Stow Lake. Heron Watch Opening Day is April 11th.

One hundred and nineteen birds have fledged at Stow Lake since the first nesting in 1993.

### Heron History Highlights

**1997:** Nest from 1996 fell into a pedal boat on Dec. 31. (This nest is now on display in the Audubon Canyon Ranch exhibit hall.) It weighed 17 pounds.

**1998:** Judy Irving premieres her new film *Heron Island* about the Stow Lake colony. She follows this short film with the much-acclaimed *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill*.

**2001:** The single year in the history of the colony when no eggs hatched from any nest. The breeding herons incubated the eggs for six months before giving up and leaving nest #1.

**2005:** The year of the successful late nesters. The fourth nesting pair of herons arrived at Stow Lake on May 10, constructed a new nest, and were sitting on eggs by May 20. Two eggs hatched on June 20, and by August the chicks had fledged.

**2006:** Best season ever. A total of 16 chicks from six nests in that year.



Photo: Jesse Krider

During the mating season male herons bring nesting material to female partners.



Photo: Jesse Krider

Heron above chases heron below—an interloper—from its nest.

# Stow Lake Heron Watch



Middle school interns and volunteers staff their high-powered scopes for the public to observe Great Blue Heron chicks in their nests.

Photo: SFNE



Nancy DeStefanis (center) leads the adult walk at Stow Lake.

Photo: SFNE



Mr. Wong of Visitation Valley Elementary shows students a Bushtit nest (sock nest).

Photo: SFNE



Students sketch a Great Blue Heron egg.

Photo: SFNE



A student examines the contents of an American Robin's nest.

Photo: SFNE



A student holds an ostrich egg.

Photo: SFNE

## Highlights of our spring classroom visits



A student prepares to examine a Bushtit nest.

Photo: SFNE



Students learn local birdcalls from naturalist Beth Kamieniecki.

Photo: SFNE

## March 7th Heron's Head Park Report

### Nancy DeStefanis

The final Heron's Head Park Tour was a huge success! Bayview Birders (interns from Lowell H.S.) gave tours to 50 people who came to enjoy the season finale at this little-known park in the Hunter's Point neighborhood of San Francisco. We observed 36 species of birds during the tour!



Photo: SFNE

Myla Ablog of LEJ (left) and Nancy DeStefanis of SF Nature Education at Heron's Head Park.

The tours were the result of a collaboration between San Francisco Nature Education and Lowell High School, the Port of San Francisco, Literacy for Environmental Justice, and Golden Gate Audubon Society.

We were pleased to collaborate with Myla Ablog of Literacy for Environmental Justice. Literacy for Environmental Justice (LEJ) is an environmental education and youth empowerment organization created specifically to address the ecological and health concerns of Bayview/Hunters Point and the surrounding communities of southeast San Francisco.



Clark's Grebe

Photo: Judy Harter

### Upcoming Events:

**Heron Watch:** Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park. Six Saturdays: April 11, 18, 25 & May 2, 9, 16. Observation site open 10 am until 1 pm. Free.

Adult and family nature walks: 10:30 am to noon. Adults \$10; seniors & children free.

Location: Follow the sign at the Stow Lake Boathouse



Red-winged Blackbird

Photo: Rick Leche

As one of its programs, LEJ manages community stewardship and environmental education programs at Heron's Head Park on behalf of the Port of San Francisco. LEJ

programs provide free, hands-on K-12 environmental educational programs year-round that draw concrete linkages between human health, the environment, and urban quality of life.

Although LEJ concentrates resources on the underserved SFUSD District 10 neighborhood, their programs are available to all schools and youth groups. In the coming year, LEJ will take the Heron's Head Park programs to a new level with the opening of the EcoCenter at Heron's Head Park, the first environmental education center south of Market Street and San Francisco's first 100% off-grid building. For more information visit [LEJ's EcoCenter site](#).



Ruddy Duck

Photo: Doug Greenberg

San Francisco Nature Education hopes to make this pilot birding program a permanent winter program so that the Bayview/Hunter's Point community and the public at large can visit Heron's Head Park, appreciate the great variety of birds that stop there, and enjoy birding tours led by high school interns.

to the observation site (about fifty steps). Free blue heron mobiles for children.

**Birding for Everyone:** Saturdays, April 4 & May 2 at 10 am near the bookstore inside the main gate of the SF Botanical Garden in Golden Gate Park (MLK Drive near 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way).

Adults \$10; seniors & children free.

### Online Giving Made Easy

Interested in giving a donation to support SF Nature Education programs? Show your support by securely donating online! [Click here](#) to make your online donation or membership payment.

### Double Your Support of SF Nature Education

One of the easiest ways to increase your support of SF Nature Education is through your employer's matching gift program. Some companies match gifts from retirees and even match the value of your volunteer time. Contact your employer's human resources office to determine whether your company matches employee contributions and to obtain a form. Some employers will match up to double the amount of your gift.

### DONATE TO SAN FRANCISCO NATURE EDUCATION VIA COMMUNITY THRIFT STORE

San Francisco Nature Education is excited to announce that we are now part of the Community Thrift Store. This is a great way to give back and get some spring cleaning out of the way.

When you donate items, be sure to say, "These items are for SF Nature Education," so that approximately 40% of the sale price of your items will help support our efforts to bring science and nature education to underserved youth.

Welcome donations include: artwork, picture frames, clothing, jewelry, books, furniture, CDs, DVDs, vinyl records, housewares, bric-a-brac.

Call (415) 861-4910 for deliveries and inquiries.

**Community Thrift Store**  
623-625 Valencia Street  
between 17th & 18th  
San Francisco, CA 94110

**Wish List:** Used or new binoculars, backpacks, and microscopes for our programs.



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