

THIRD GRADE PROGRAM CONTINUES IN CLASSROOM AND FIELD

San Francisco Nature Education's program for third-grade students continued this spring with classroom visits at Hillcrest Elementary School and field trips with students from Jose Ortega Elementary School.



Two students compare eggs from different bird species.



Volunteer Pat Kearns points out the unique features of a mallard to a student.



SFNE naturalist Tina Lui and a student examine an ostrich egg.



Students take a break on a field trip at Stow Lake.



A field trip group pauses for a photo at Stow Lake with SFNE naturalist Ben Andrews.

Get your tickets now for Seventh Annual Bird Calling Contest

San Francisco Nature Education's Seventh Annual Bird Calling Contest is coming Friday, May 23!

Third-grade classes from Jose Ortega Elementary School will compete with calls, costumes and skits with cool facts about their local birds. Students from Hillcrest Elementary School will entertain with song and dance, or will conduct presentations on local birds. Entertainment will be provided by famous accordionist Peter DiBono.

A limited number of seats are available for this beloved and entertaining San Francisco tradition, so be sure to get your tickets today!

Tickets are \$10 each, payable in advance to:
San Francisco Nature Education
3450 Geary Blvd., Suite 208
San Francisco, CA 94118

The contest will be held from 10:30 a.m. to noon on Friday, May 23 at Mercy High School, 3250 19th Ave., San Francisco.

For further information, please contact SFNE Associate Director Tom Prete at tprete@sfnature.org, or call (415) 387-9160.

Support S.F. Nature Education: Your Donations Make a Difference!

Our engaging public and school programs couldn't exist without generous contributions from people like you.

Would you please send in a contribution today?

Please mail contributions to:
San Francisco Nature Education
3450 Geary Blvd. Suite 208
San Francisco, CA, 94118

Or Donate online at www.sfnature.org!

Calling out for volunteers!

Do you love science and nature? Do you want other people to learn to know and love science and nature, too? San Francisco Nature Education needs volunteers like you! We have openings for adult volunteers as well as interns in middle school and high school.

For more information about our adult volunteer opportunities and an application form, please visit www.sfnature.org/get_involved/volunteer.html.

For more information about student internships and an application form, please visit www.sfnature.org/programs/intern.html.

Great blues hatch chicks at Stow Lake

Heron Watch 2008 is shaping up well for both the great blue herons and San Francisco Nature Education. The birds have occupied four nest sites at Stow Lake, and SFNE has welcomed back longtime heron watchers and introduced many new people to this remarkable annual pageant of nature in the heart of the city.



Photo courtesy Jesse Krider

An adult great blue heron with three chicks.

As of the end of April, we observed nine chicks in three nests around Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park.

The arrival of the month of May means most chicks



are four weeks old, and both parents will be hunting continuously for food for the ever-hungry chicks.

Please join us on May 10 and May 17 to observe as the newest generation of great blue herons prepares to take flight. SFNE volunteers will be on hand from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. to assist with observation. Family and adult Nature Walks leave at 10:30 a.m. and conclude at noon. For more information, please visit www.sfnature.org/programs/heron_watch.html.

Birding for Everyone Family Nature Walk

By Trip Leader Angie Geiger

The 45 adults and children who came to the May Birding for Everyone Walk at Strybing Botanical Garden were greeted with sunshine and balmy weather.

We started out in the Demonstration Garden. As we approached the lawn area, we noticed that several American robins and California towhees were scolding loudly and giving alarm calls. This is a good indication that a hawk might be in the area, and sure enough, one astute participant soon spotted a mature red-shouldered hawk in a eucalyptus tree across the lawn. Everyone aimed their binoculars at the bird and we got fairly good looks. All of a sudden, the hawk swooped down from the Eucalyptus tree right toward us, passed within a few feet overhead and landed on a low branch in a small tree that was much closer. After a minute it became obvious that the hawk was intently focused on an active gopher hole just below the tree. By this time, even passers-by had stopped to watch. Suddenly, the hawk dove out of the tree and landed on the gopher-hole. It briefly spread both wings over the hole, and when it lifted its wings it had a gopher securely grasped in its talons. Everyone, passers-by included, applauded. The hawk flew back to its perch to get an even better grip and then flew away over our heads to have breakfast in a more private tree, or perhaps to deliver its prize to a mate or nestlings. Someone commented, "Wow, I never knew bird-watching could be this exciting."

We went on to the Succulents Garden, and along the way we heard much bird song, including a lovely winter wren song coming from the redwood forest. The garden was buzzing with bird activity, including California quail, Anna's and Allen's hummingbirds, many performing display flights, song sparrows, chestnut-backed chickadees and a red-tailed hawk soaring over head. We were delighted to discover a downy woodpecker nesting hole in a dead century tree spike as the bird flew repeatedly between it and a nearby tree. What a day!

Join us for our guided nature walks on the first Saturday of every month at the San Francisco Botanical Garden, 10 a.m. until noon. Visit our Web site for more details: <http://www.sfnature.org/programs/bfe.html>.

Upcoming Dates: June 7, July 5, Aug. 2 (rain cancels.)

Around Stow Lake

Great blue herons are the stars of the Stow Lake show in spring, but it's nesting time for other birds at Stow Lake as well. They have been busy building nests, incubating eggs and caring for chicks.



An adult pie-billed grebe with black line on its beak swims beside a chick with its reddish beak and black zig-zag lines.

Pie-billed grebes have produced three nests this year. The nests are constructed of vegetation about three to 10 feet from the shoreline.



Photos courtesy Minh La

A total of nine Canada goose goslings have been observed, with four adults accompanying them. It's not clear, but it could be that two clutches have merged into one big gosling group.

Join us for free family and adult Nature Walks to observe these nesting birds and other wildlife on May 10 and May 17, from 10:30 a.m. to noon. Follow the signs from the Stow Lake Boathouse. For more information, please visit www.sfnature.org/programs/heron_watch.html.