



Executive Director's Corner

Nancy DeStefanis

Thank you to all those who generously supported our end of the year appeal. We continue to need your support. If you were unable to give in 2008, please make a gift as you are able in early 2009 to pay down our 2008 shortfall. I look forward to seeing you at one of our public programs in 2009.

Please make a donation now to support our school and public programs:

www.sfnature.org/get_involved/index.html

We welcome volunteers for our school and public programs.

Please visit **Get Involved:** www.sfnature.org

Best regards,
Nancy DeStefanis

Upcoming Events:

January 24-May 28: Photos by Janet Kessler
SF Public Library, Main Branch, 5th floor

Celebrating our Urban Wildness: Coyotes to Quail

Saturday, February 7 in the SF Botanical Garden:
Birding for Everyone

Saturday, February 7 in the Bayview District:
Bird Watching in Heron's Head Park

Opening Day at Heron's Head Park Sachi Jain

On a brisk, sunny January day, interns from San Francisco's Lowell High School led the first of a series of free birding tours at Heron's Head Park in collaboration with San Francisco Nature Education. Situated near a PG&E power plant and tall smokestacks, Heron's Head Park in SF's Bayview district seems an unlikely oasis for migratory birds. However, this former industrial waste zone has been transformed into a 25-acre wetland teeming with over 100 species of birds that come to rest every winter.



Greater Scaup

Photo: Judy Harter

Among the first birds we sighted during the tour were a Snowy Egret and several American Avocets wading in a salt marsh. Further along the coastline,

a Black Oystercatcher cracked open a mussel shell with its brilliant orange bill. The interns explained

the differences between a Greater and Lesser Scaup, as well as the Clark's and Western Grebes, all of which we spotted gliding on the bay. Male Buffleheads flashed their white neck spots as they dove into the water and emerged with tasty morsels.

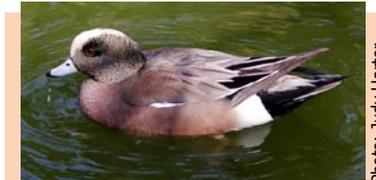


Bufflehead

Photo: Doug Greenberg

Near the tip of the park a pair of Common Goldeneyes and an American

Wigeon swam past a Double-crested Cormorant that was spreading its black wings. Participants pointed at a Brown Pelican looking for fish and a flock of Canada Geese nibbling grass. The Ruddy Duck, Surf Scoter, and Willet were other water birds we observed.



American Wigeon

Photo: Judy Harter

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Opening Day crowd for first tour.

Photo: SFNE

In the surrounding grasses and brush we caught glimpses of a European Starling, an American Kestrel, and an American Crow. Smaller birds included the iridescent Anna's Hummingbird and the Savannah Sparrow.

Throughout the tour participants commented that the interns were knowledgeable about bird species. Noted one participant, "They answered questions and found correct answers." The public also seemed surprised by the number of birds they saw. "I've been to Heron's Head Park before," said a participant named Trish, "but I never saw as many birds as today."

About 25 people participated in the tour and many more stopped to listen. The interns said that by teaching they became better able to identify the birds themselves.

Please Join Us Next Time!

Heron's Head Park: Public tours, 10 a.m.—noon at Jennings Street and Cargo, 2 blocks south of Pier 96. For access by public transportation go to: www.sfmta.com. Free parking available in lot outside park.

Dates: Saturdays: February 7 and March 7, 2009

Interns will be joined by Nancy DeStefanis and SF Nature Education naturalists Sachi Jain and Alan Hopkins.

Co-sponsored by Literacy for Environmental Justice (LEJ), Port of San Francisco, and Golden Gate Audubon Society (GGAS).



Photo: Len Blumin

Black Oystercatchers



Photo: Doug Greenberg

Black-necked Stilt



Photo: Alan Hopkins

4th grader observes seabirds with the help of interns Roseanna and Aileen.



Photo: SFNE

Myla Ablog, Heron's Head Park steward for LEJ, and Nancy DeStefanis

Bird Watching at Heron's Head Park



Photo: Alan Hopkins

Interns Ariana (blue jacket) and Ruby (far right in white cap) and others observe shorebirds.



Photo: Alan Hopkins

Interns Tina and Raymond assist a birdwatcher with the spotting scope.

The SF Naturalists Society presents a free lecture:

Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915

Nancy DeStefanis will present a slide show, movie footage, and music of the Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915. The presentation will include rarely seen images, including dramatic opening-day footage provided by the Prelinger Archives.

Thursday, Feb. 12, 7:30 - 9 pm
Randall Museum, 55 Museum Way
Corona Heights, San Francisco
www.randallmuseum.org

For access by public transportation go to: www.sfmta.com Free parking outside the Randall Museum.

For more information please visit www.sfnature.org

Birding for Everyone Angie Geiger

In spite of extensive frost and chilly temperatures, about 25 children and adults gathered at the front of the San Francisco Botanical Garden (Strybing Arboretum) for the Birding for Everyone Walk on January 3rd. The sky was sunny and blue as we set out for the Wildfowl Pond.

On the way, our attention was drawn by activity in the trees and on the lawn. There were so many birds it was difficult to decide which to focus on first. We started with a flock of small gulls nearby, which we identified as Mew Gulls



Photo: Len Blumin

Mew Gulls

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by their petite size, greenish-gray legs, and yellow bills. Next we scanned a group of sparrows on the lawn and discovered mostly White-crowned Sparrows, both adults and the less conspicuous immature birds.



Yellow-rumped Warbler

Photo: Judy Harter

We were delighted to observe a small group of California Quail, both male and female. In the canopy high above us, a flock of warblers flitted about. These were primarily Yellow-rumped

Warblers and an occasional Townsend's Warbler. As we decided to move on, a Black Phoebe landed on a post nearby and to our delight showed off his fly-catching skills. Then an Anna's



Black Phoebe

Photo: Judy Harter

Hummingbird zoomed in and performed two display flights.

On the pond we spotted the winter regulars, including American Coots, Mallards, and a single representative of each of four species of gulls: Ring-billed, Western, Glaucous-winged, and Mew. We moved on to the Chilean Garden to check the trees for the Red-breasted Sapsucker. One man called out, "What's that?" and we caught a glimpse of a Hutton's Vireo. However, there was no Sapsucker.

We moved on to see what some of the Pyracantha bushes with their bright berries might have attracted. As we were scanning a tree loaded



Hutton's Vireo

Photo: Jerry Oldenettel

with berries, we were all startled when the Red-breasted Sapsucker flew just a few feet over our heads from a tree behind us into the Pyracantha bush. Most everyone caught at least a glimpse of this elusive bird. The tree that the Sapsucker flew into was covered with American Robins with a few House Finches in the mix.



Red-breasted Sapsucker

Photo: Andy Purviance

Our next exciting sighting was an Orange-crowned Warbler in the Succulent Garden. Most of the group got great views as the bird flitted about below eye-level in the cacti.

Next, we could hear many bird calls and chip notes as we walked through the



Orange-crowned Warbler

Photo: Rick Leche

California Garden. The flowering bushes there gave us some great views of Chestnut-backed Chickadees and more Warblers now much closer.

We had to hurry to make it back to the front gate by noon, and everyone

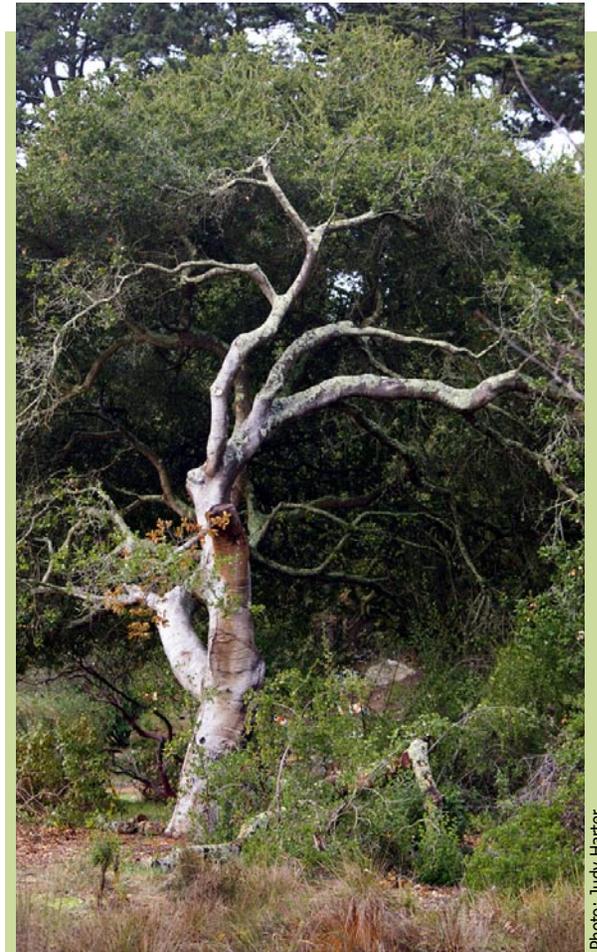
agreed that it had been an interesting and very successful walk.

Birding for Everyone meets on first Saturdays in February, March, and April. Join us at 10 am near the bookstore inside the main gate of the SF Botanical Garden in Golden Gate Park (MLK Dr. near 9th Ave. & Lincoln Way).



Chestnut-backed Chickadee

Photo: Judy Harter



In the California Garden, SF Botanical Garden

Photo: Judy Harter

Wish List

Used or new binoculars, backpacks, and microscopes for our programs.

San Francisco
Nature
Education



Contact us:
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www.sfnature.org