



# Birding at Crissy Field

*Blue Heron Newsletter • March 2009*

## Executive Director's Corner

Nancy DeStefanis

Dear Friends,

The Great Blue Herons are back!

For the 16th year Great Blue Herons are nesting at Stow Lake. Our Heron Watch Program is led by SF Nature naturalists and middle and high school interns. This year's program starts Saturday April 11th, and continues for six Saturdays, ending on May 16th.

I look forward to seeing you at Stow Lake. As an extra surprise on opening day we will give out Great Blue Heron mobiles to all children.

The April newsletter will feature the latest photos of this year's herons, along with a report on the current nesting colony.

Please visit our website [www.sfnature.org](http://www.sfnature.org) and click on Saturday Public Programs, Heron Watch, for dates and times.

Best regards,

Nancy DeStefanis

## SF Nature Education Expands to Crissy Field

Andy Kleinhesselink

On Thursday, February 12th, San Francisco Nature Education led its first birding field trip ever at the Crissy Field tidal lagoon and salt marsh in the Presidio. Ms. Flanigan and Ms. Yildiz's fifth-grade classes, 57 students in total, broke the ground for our exploration of Crissy.

The students observed—through binoculars and spotting scopes—beautiful Snowy Egrets, Greater Scaup, Bufflehead, Ruddy Ducks, a Brown Pelican, Red-throated Loon and even a Long-billed Curlew; all birds that SF Nature Education field trips don't typically see in Golden Gate Park. We had wonderful help and inspiration from SF Nature naturalist Matt Zlatunich, who has been bird watching at Crissy Lagoon for many years.

It was the first field trip for new naturalists Rachel Townsend and Alyssa Babin. Also on hand were dedicated SF Nature naturalists Linda Grant,



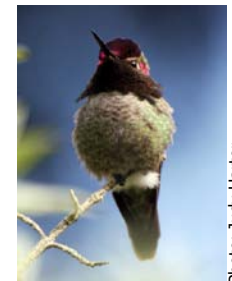
Andy Kleinhesselink teaches students to use binoculars at Crissy Field.

Photo: SFNE

Beth Kamieniecki and me. There were six groups of students led by a naturalist. Each group observed approximately 25 different birds.



Photo: SFNE



Anna's Hummingbird

Photo: Judy Harter

Rachel Townsend and chaperone with a group of fifth graders in the Presidio.



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Photo: SFNE

Matt Zlatunich and his group observe birds at the lagoon.



Photo: SFNE

Naturalist Rachel Townsend operates the spotting scope while a student gets an up-close and personal view of a Long-billed Curlew.

## Fifth-grade students on the first field trip to Crissy Field



Photo: SFNE

Andy Kleinhesselink and teacher, Ms. Yildiz, with a group of fifth graders.



Photo: Judy Harter

Snowy Egret



Photo: Rick Leche

Pied-billed Grebe

Some of the 25  
bird species spotted  
at Crissy Field



Photo: Len Blumin

Red-throated Loon



Photo: Len Blumin

Long-billed Curlew

## Why I Volunteer

Linda Grant



Photo: SFNE

I have always considered my lifelong awareness and appreciation of the natural world a gift—a gift to be shared with others. That is why I am a volunteer naturalist with San Francisco Nature

Education. I enjoy being an inspiration to underserved school children, to teach them from an early age how to become stewards of the environment. It is gratifying to instruct eager students how to identify a bird by sound as well as by sight, to show them how specialized beaks are adapted to find and eat certain foods, and to use both the classroom and field trips to San Francisco parks to foster that same awareness and appreciation for their local environment. The ability to use my communication skills, my birding skills, and my enthusiasm for teaching is very rewarding.

## Why I Volunteer

Tina Lui



Photo: SFNE

I have volunteered as a naturalist with San Francisco Nature Education since September 2007. I love teaching children the joys of nature and observing birds.

My life as a college student is very demanding. Nevertheless, I have found the time to donate a Tuesday morning each week. On some Tuesdays I conduct classroom visits and on others I lead third graders on field trips to the SF Botanical Garden or Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park. The students are so excited and eager to spot the birds!

At San Francisco Nature Education I can work with nature and with children, which is what I want to do in the future as a counselor. I like being able to give back and let everyone have an equal chance in learning about nature.

## Why I Volunteer

Andy Kleinhesselink



Photo: SFNE

I grew up exploring the rural and wild landscapes of southern Oregon. As a young child I was fascinated by finding bugs, splashing in puddles, and catching lizards. I had parents who

nurtured my consuming interest in nature by buying me a subscription to *Ranger Rick* and taking me to natural history museums. But moving to urban San Francisco showed me that not all kids are so fortunate. Kids growing up with limited means to travel outside of the city cannot have the same rich experiences in nature that I had growing up. I work with SF Nature Education because it is my humble hope that it can give kids at least a hint of the natural world that lies beyond the streets of the city.

There are lots of environmental education organizations working to teach children, but SF Nature is different. I volunteer here because SF Nature focuses on birds. As many naturalists have observed, birdwatchers outnumber mammal

### Interested in Volunteering as a Naturalist?

To become part of our exciting nature education programs for underserved youth, please send us a letter of introduction, including a description of your experience in nature; any relevant training, degrees, and/or affiliations; details of any experience with birds or working with children; when you are available (we need Tuesday to Friday mornings for school programs or Saturday mornings to help with nature walks); and anything else you think we might want to know about you. We provide training; experience is not required.

Please send your e-mail to:  
[volunteer@sfnature.org](mailto:volunteer@sfnature.org).

watchers for good reason. Birds are diurnal, colorful, active, vocal, and diverse. This makes birds an accessible and engaging gateway to appreciating the natural world.

By equipping students with binoculars and matching them with volunteer naturalists, SF Nature does not just tell students about nature, it shows them firsthand the biology, beauty, and diversity of nature. And I believe in the long run that teaching kids about nature is also the best way to protect it. I believe that kids who have positive experiences with nature will grow up to preserve nature when they are adults.

If the current trend is for a childhood increasingly spent with the screen of electronic devices, will the next generation take the steps to preserve nature? Will they even be able to appreciate it? Perhaps just as tragically, will they discover birding and the beauty of nature late in life, and regret that they had not discovered it sooner? If only someone had shown them nature when they were kids . . . Kids need mentors to show them nature. You can be that mentor: volunteer with SF Nature Education.



Photo: Judy Harter

Western Gull, Great Egret, and Red-eared Slider turtles at Stow Lake.

## Birding for Everyone

Sharon Pretti

We had great weather and a great trip—about 20 people of all ages. We were treated to Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks doing courtship displays. We saw a variety of resident birds, including Black Phoebes, Bushtits, White-crowned and Song Sparrows, and Chestnut-backed Chickadees.



Photo: Rick Leche

Cedar Waxwing

The succulent garden had an abundance of hummingbirds, and we had a wonderful view of an Allen's Hummingbird. Many Anna's Hummingbirds were also seen. Here we also saw wintering Cedar Waxwings, House Finches and Northern Flickers.

Our sightings continued and included American Robins, California Towhees, Common Ravens, American Coots, and Mallards.

At the Wildfowl Pond we found resident Western Gulls, wintering Mew Gulls, and a wintering Glaucous-winged Gull. A special highlight here was the sight of male and female Hooded Mergansers.



Photo: Judy Harter

Hooded Mergansers

*Birding for Everyone* next meets on Saturday, April 4. Join us 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). Seniors & children free. Adults: \$10

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

San Francisco  
Nature  
Education



Contact SFNE:  
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telephone: 415-387-9160  
[www.sfnature.org](http://www.sfnature.org)



Photo: Courtesy John C. Robinson

John C. Robinson, author and ornithologist, with a group of student birders.

### Changing the Face of Environmental Conservation Through Birding

Please join us for a free lecture on Tuesday, March 31, at 6 p.m. at the Crissy Field Center Gathering Room.

The speaker will be John C. Robinson, a professional ornithologist, wildlife biologist, and author of *Birding for Everyone: Encouraging People of Color to Become Birdwatchers*.

He will explore the curious lack of a minority presence in the birding community, and will offer new solutions for changing the face of conservation through birding. Copies of his book, *Birding for Everyone*, will be available for purchase and signing by the author.

Mr. Robinson is a renowned natural history tour guide and author of five books on birds, nature, and the environment. An African-American ornithologist, he is an advocate for minorities in bird watching. For more than 25 years he worked as a wildlife biologist and ornithologist for the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture.

Admission is free. The Crissy Field Center (Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy) is located at 603 Mason Street at Halleck in the Presidio of San Francisco.

This event is co-sponsored by San Francisco Nature Education, the Crissy Field Center, Golden Gate Raptor Observatory, and Golden Gate Audubon Society. Parking is available behind the Crissy Field Center. For public transit directions go to: [www.sfmta.org](http://www.sfmta.org) Directions to the Crissy Field Center are available at: [http://www.parksconservancy.org/our\\_work/crissy/visit.asp](http://www.parksconservancy.org/our_work/crissy/visit.asp)

For more information, please check our website [www.sfnature.org](http://www.sfnature.org) or e-mail San Francisco Nature Education: [info@sfnature.org](mailto:info@sfnature.org) or telephone: 415 387-9160.

#### 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**