

Executive Director's Corner

Nancy DeStefanis

This spring will bring a new event: **Birding Safari**. Plan to come out with us for a friendly competition on either March 27th or April 10th here in San Francisco. It will be a great way to see lots of birds with small groups of no more than six people led by a top-notch birding guide. Reserve your place now with the mail-in coupon provided.

Please join us on one of our upcoming Saturday morning birding tours of the San Francisco Botanical Garden or Heron's Head Park. See details on page 5 for *all* upcoming events.

Heron Watch begins Saturday, April 10th. We have spotted three Great Blue Herons in the old nests at the tops of the trees on Heron Island.

Stay tuned for more developments! And thanks again for your support.

Best regards,
Nancy DeStefanis

Support SF Nature Education: 



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Third-Grade Trip to Heron's Head

Linda Grant, Naturalist



The rain held off on February 2nd, as we led a group of 23 third graders from E.R. Taylor Elementary School on a birding walk at Heron's Head Park on San Francisco Bay. The park hosts a number of wintering birds, including ducks, shorebirds, gulls, and terns. Jeanne Crawford staffed the spotting scope and showed students how to use it to magnify distant birds.

The first birds we encountered were familiar to the students: a White-crowned Sparrow and an Anna's Hummingbird. Students were told how the male Anna's Hummingbirds perform spectacular courtship dives for females, at the bottom of which they abruptly produce a loud "chirp" sound with their tail-feathers.

On the bay we spotted Ruddy Ducks, Buffleheads, Clark's Grebes, Eared Grebes, Double-crested Cormorants, Snowy Egrets, and Brown Pelicans.



Students show their field journals after sketching favorite birds.



Third graders hike the trail at Heron's Head Park.

On the marsh we sighted Long-billed Curlews, Willets, Black-bellied Plovers, Great Egrets, American Coots, American Avocets, and Western and Mew Gulls.

While the students took a snack break they examined nearby clam, mussel, and oyster shells, and wondered aloud what could have been inside them.

The highlight of the day occurred on our return walk, when we sighted two different hovering birds. The first was an American Kestrel, the only North American falcon to habitually hover with rapid wing beats, keeping its head motionless while scanning the ground for prey. The other bird was a Belted Kingfisher, which hovers over water looking for food and plunges head-first into the water when it finds a fish.

All in all it was a very successful day of rainless skies and good birding.

(more photos on next page)



Photo: SFNE

Naturalist Angela Tremolada, chaperone Dottie, and students near shore of SF Bay.



Photo: SFNE

Naturalist Linda Grant (left) with teacher Ms. Elmansoumi and students.

Third-Graders and their Guides Enjoy Heron's Head Park



Photo: Judy Harter

Belted Kingfisher



Photo: SFNE

Students show off a banana slug.



Photo: Judy Harter

Ruddy Duck



Photo: Rick Leche

American Kestrel



Photo: SFNE

Naturalist Jeanne Crawford and a chaperone with third-grade students.

Public Tours at Heron's Head Park

Yvonne Chang, Intern

On the cold, wet morning of February 6th, Lowell interns and SFNE naturalists met at Heron's Head Park to begin our second day of tours. We started the day with a brief orientation led by naturalist Alan Hopkins, and not ten seconds after we started walking on the trail we saw three **Double-crested Cormorants**. As our orientation ended, the morning drizzle

Afterwards, everyone sat down to count the birds they had seen and to draw pictures of some of them. Then, a **White-crowned Sparrow** perched on top of a bush ten feet away from us! It was an amazing view that soon prompted the kids to color another bird in their journals.

We saw three **Black Oystercatchers**, one of which was prying open a clam with its striking red bill. We spotted **Say's Phoebe**, **Western**, **Clark's**, and **Horned Grebes**,



Tour Photos: SFNE

Interns Arty (far left) and Yvonne (far right) lead a tour for Friends of the Children. Alan Hopkins, resident instructor, is third from right.

came to a halt—perfect for the 10 AM tours.

Along with Alan Hopkins, interns Arty and Melissa led the Friends of the Children tour for two children and five chaperones. The children received undivided attention from our two interns, and learned how to use binoculars and a spotting scope. With their newly acquired skills the kids spotted many birds, including a speedy little **Anna's Hummingbird**.



Photo: Len Blumin

Eurasian Wigeon

and a **Western Meadowlark**. Further along the trail we saw a single **Eurasian Wigeon** lurking among a group of **American Wigeons**. Ending the day by seeing this infrequent visitor to Heron's Head Park reminded me to keep my eyes open. We saw 39 different species of birds. This place is full of little feathered surprises.



Interns Aileen (far left), Megan, and Ariana (both far right) with three tour participants.

This public program is co-sponsored by Literacy for Environmental Justice (LEJ) and the Port of San Francisco.



Interns Ruby Lam (right) and Melissa Barrios show a student how to observe birds through a spotting scope.



Photo: Doug Greenberg

Say's Phoebe



Photo: SFNE

Black Oystercatcher



Photo: SFNE

American Avocet

Birding for Everyone Report

Angie Geiger, Naturalist

In spite of a stormy week, the weather cleared up just in time for the February 6th *Birding for Everyone* walk at the SF Botanical Garden. Although the skies were cloudy, the rain stayed away for the duration of the walk. The birds took advantage of the break in the weather to come out to forage. Among the first birds we spotted were **California Quail**. They were on the small lawn by the Fragrance Garden—two males and one female.



Photo: Judy Harter

California Quail

While looking at the quail we noticed a number of other birds feeding on the lawn. In the sparrow family, we had **White-crowned Sparrows**, **Song Sparrows**, **Fox Sparrows**, and **California Towhees**. Mixed in were some **Yellow-rumped Warblers** on the ground and in the small trees dotting the Great Meadow. The lawn also hosted abundant **American Robins**, no doubt finding many worms in the wet grass. We were also treated to the insect-like song of a male **Dark-eyed Junco**.

The next stop was the Wildfowl Pond, which had only **American Coots** and a pair of **Mallards**. More interesting were the aerial acrobatics of a **Black Phoebe** snatching insects out of the air. We stopped to check the “Sapsucker Tree” in the Chilean Garden, and soon spotted our bird, the **Red-breasted Sapsucker**,



Photo: Jerry Oldenettel

Orange-crowned Warbler

We next walked through a mostly silent Redwood Grove, which was magical nevertheless. Since much of the south side of the garden was closed due to construction, we wove back past the Wildfowl Pond



Photo: Rick Leche

Ruby-crowned Kinglet

and along the northern perimeter. As we emerged into the Fragrance Garden, two boisterous **Scrub Jays** were competing with squirrels for peanut handouts from some park visitors.

We heard singing overhead and looked up to find a male **Lesser Goldfinch** singing alongside a number of **House Finches**. A sharp-eyed participant noticed movement in the underbrush. It was



Photo: Jerry Oldenettel

Lesser Goldfinch

clinging to a main trunk and working the wells. We moved on to the Succulent Garden, where we spotted an **Orange-crowned Warbler** on one of the many red flower spikes found throughout this area. These flowers also attracted a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** and some **Anna’s Hummingbirds**.



Photo: Doug Greenberg

House Finch

a **Hermit Thrush**, mostly skulking as these birds often do. This spot also produced a few **Golden-crowned Sparrows** in the bushes.

Our final birds of the day were two majestic adult **Red-tailed Hawks** soaring on the thermals overhead.



Photo: Judy Harter

Golden-crowned Sparrow



Photo: Rick Leche

Red-tailed Hawk

Hidden Feathers: A Birding Safari Fundraiser in SF Andy Kleinhesselink



Few cities have as many bird species as San Francisco. Over 390 bird species have been recorded in the city to date, and 149 species have been seen in a single day! Anyone who lives near San Francisco is in one of the most exciting places to watch birds in the United States.


This is especially so in the spring when migrating birds surge north along the California coast. Each spring birders celebrate the season by touring the city for a day and trying to see as many species as they can. However, a successful “big day” is not simple, it requires advanced planning and lots of knowledge about where to look for birds.

So to help more people enjoy this seasonal spectacle, we have enlisted expert guides from the city’s birding community to lead you through an exhilarating day of birding in the city this spring. Each leader will design a special route to find as many bird species as possible in one morning and afternoon. Over 100 species might be possible!

The spring *Birding Safari* will be a special fundraising event for the educational programs of SF Nature Education. The money raised will go directly to our mission to introduce public school students to the diversity of life and nature in San Francisco.

Participation requires a donation of \$100 per individual (only about a dollar per bird—a great deal!). Field trips will take place from 8 am to 3 pm on two Saturdays: March 27th and April 10th. (Select only one date.) Trips will cover the entire city starting in different locations, and will wrap up with a tallying of our lists and recounting of highlights at the end of the day.

Groups will be limited to six attendees; trips will go rain or shine. Field leaders will include: Josiah Clark, Angie Geiger, Alan Hopkins, Andy Kleinhesselink, and Dominic Mozur, among others.

Space is limited. Reserve yours by clicking  and e-mailing us contact information and the date you have selected, or mail us a check for \$100 per participant with the coupon below to:

SF Nature Education
3450 Geary Blvd. Ste. 208
San Francisco, CA 94118

Registration for SF Nature Education’s Birding Safari 2010

Name: _____

Address: _____

Date Requested: ___ Sat., March 27 ___ Sat., April 10 (pick one)

Amount of check enclosed @ \$100 per participant: _____

E-mail: _____ **Phone:** (just in case) _____

Please make check payable to *San Francisco Nature Education*. Thank you!

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.

You can download an application from this web page:

http://www.sfnature.org/get_involved/volunteer.html

Upcoming Events

Birding for Everyone

First Saturdays: March 6 and April 3, 10 am—noon.
Meet us near the bookstore inside the main gate of the SF Botanical Garden in Golden Gate Park (MLK Drive near 9th Ave. at Lincoln). Adults \$10; no one turned away due to lack of funds.

Birding Classes for Kids

First Saturdays: March 6 and April 3, 10 am—noon.
Meet us near the bookstore inside the main gate of the SF Botanical Garden in Golden Gate Park (MLK Drive near 9th Ave. at Lincoln). Adults \$10; no one turned away due to lack of funds.

Heron’s Head Park Tours

Date: Saturday, March 6: final tours.

Tours: 10, 10:30, 11, and last tour @ 11:30 am.
Tours take approximately one hour.

Location: Jennings Street & Cargo Way,
two blocks south of Pier 96.

Donation: Adults \$10, children free; no one turned away due to lack of funds.

Free Parking: Available near entrance.
Please visit sfnature.org for more information, or plan your trip via public transit at [MUNI’s web site](#).

Birds Online! You can see many birds and plants of the SF Botanical Garden at a new web site: SFinBloom.com. Birds are featured first in the [photo galleries](#).

Wish List: Used or new backpacks for our programs.



Contact SFNE:
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www.sfnature.org