

### Executive Director's Corner

We are excited to inform you that we have received a challenge grant of \$5,000 from two of our generous donors. The recession has seriously reduced donations and foundation grants.

*From May 1st to June 30th, each donation we receive will be matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis. Our goal is to raise at least \$5,000 to match the challenge grant and to help us continue our work in school programs and Saturday public programs.*

During the past year:

- Our Saturday birding programs for youths and adults have served well over 1,500 visitors in San Francisco and Oakland.
- KQED Channel 9 and other Northern CA public television stations have been airing "Great Blue Herons of Golden Gate Park," which I narrate.
- We incorporated middle school students into our Heron Watch intern program and
- High school students into leading tours at Heron's Head Park, Heron Watch, and Birding for Kids.

Please take advantage of this wonderful challenge grant so that SF Nature Education can continue our award-winning programs into 2011.

Support SF Nature Education



Donations by check can be sent to: San Francisco Nature Education, 3450 Geary Blvd. Suite 208, SF, CA 94118. All donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Thank you for your support!

Nancy DeStefanis

### McCoppin Third-Graders Visit Stow Lake Linda Grant, Naturalist

On Thursday, May 13, Ms. Patricia Hong's third-grade class from McCoppin Elementary School began a field trip to Golden Gate Park. Nancy DeStefanis, naturalist Mary K. Austin, and I led a group of students around Stow Lake. We first heard the "shack shack shack" of the black-crested Steller's Jay near the Rustic Bridge. After crossing the bridge we were pleasantly surprised to see a female Mallard with three ducklings near the path. The drake was nearby, and the female didn't seem to mind the students watching so closely.

Walking on, we stopped to examine the bright orange California poppy, the state flower of California. We also saw light blue Forget-me-nots growing by the Golden Gate Pavilion.

The highlight of the day was spotting a Black Phoebe bringing insects to feed its nestlings. The mud and grass cup nest was built on the eave of the pavilion. The students got a good look at the nest site as they listened



Canada goslings grazing near Stow Lake.

to the "tee hee, tee hoo" calls of the parents. Overhead, a Turkey Vulture glided by.

Later the students were excited to watch the Great Blue Herons in their nests using binoculars loaned by San Francisco Nature Education.



Mary K. Austin, naturalist, and her group of third-graders.



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Photo: Linda Grant

Nancy DeStefanis and her group.

## McCoppin Third-Graders at Stow Lake



Photo: Linda Grant

Can you name this domestic bird that folks sometimes drop off at Stow Lake? Answer below.



Photo: Linda Grant

Ms. Hong and her third-grade class.



Photo: Ernest Gaudreau

Heron chicks in their treetop nests.

Answer to question above: It's a Muscovy duck. Males have black feathers; females have white ones.

## McCoppin Second Graders' Field Trip

Linda Grant, Naturalist

Ah, Spring! The bees are hummin' and the Great Blue Herons are nesting at Stow Lake. On May 11th, Ms. Pamela Kahn's second-grade class from McCoppin Elementary School joined Nancy DeStefanis and me for a sunny morning outing. The boys and girls observed birds and listened to their songs and calls.

Ms. Kahn and I began our trip with close-up views of the Western Gull and Brewer's Blackbird. As we walked around the lake we spotted the Great Blue Herons standing tall in their nests, a highlight of the day.



Photo: SFNE

Linda Grant, naturalist, and Ms. Pamela Kahn with second graders.

Moving along the path we encountered Song Sparrows, a Red-tailed Hawk soaring overhead, and a Pied-billed Grebe in the water.

After crossing the Roman Bridge the students listened to the trill of a Dark-eyed Junco. At the Golden Gate Pavilion they heard the cooing of nesting Rock Pigeons and the call of a Black Phoebe. The children also had good looks at Canada Geese with their fast-growing goslings.

After a full morning of birding we concluded the walk with a close-up look at "Spiny," the Softshell Turtle that likes to sunbathe on the rocks near the picnic tables where the children were eating their lunches.



Photo: Judy Harter

Black Phoebe



Photo: Linda Grant

Spiny Softshell Turtle on the rocks near the picnic table.



Photo: Judy Harter

Pied-billed Grebe



Photo: Linda Grant

Two Red-Eared Slider Turtles enjoy a sun bath.



Photo: SFNE

Peter Baty, an ERM Corporation volunteer (in cap), with heron nest observers.



Photo: Ernest Gaudreau

Sharon Pretti (in purple) prepares to lead nature walk while intern Logan (far right) holds the spotting scope.

## Heron Watch Update

Nancy DeStefanis, Director, SFNE

The Great Blue Heron chicks are now four feet tall and highly visible from Stow Lake and Strawberry Island.

Our volunteer monitors, Kate Ulrich and Sharon Parker, have observed five nests with chicks, for a total of 13 chicks. Another nest appears to have chicks but we are not certain at this time. Heron parents at nest #7 appear to be incubating eggs.

When the chicks are four weeks old, both parents are often away from the nest catching fish and gophers to feed their young. Once the heron chicks reach six weeks they become as tall as their parents: four feet.

We have been observing most of the chicks, now between seven and eight weeks old, preparing to branch hop. Many are out of the nests and flapping their wings all the time.

Chicks are helpless and cannot fly until approximately eleven weeks old. At that age the chicks typically will be strong enough to fly to the mainland. Their first flights are very bumpy rides! When the chicks learn to fly, all the herons depart from Stow Lake. They do not stay together as a unit.

Our Heron Watch volunteers have been wonderful: Sharon Pretti, Deputy Director; all of our middle- and high-school interns; and volunteers from ERM Corporation and the San Francisco community. Next month we'll publish the final nesting season numbers.



Photo: SFNE

Interns Zev, Rafael, and Logan sketch some of the birds they observed.



Photo: Ernest Gaudreau

Nancy (in brown), Sharon Pretti (in purple), and Rafael, an intern, at the Heron Watch information table.



Photo: SFNE

Intern Logan K. explains the heron lifecycle to a visitor.



Photo: Ernest Gaudreau

Two great blue herons meet at the nest. Both stretch in greeting.



Photo: Ernest Gaudreau

These two heron chicks are almost ready to fledge.

## Training for Volunteers Starts in September

San Francisco Nature Education welcomes volunteers in its School Program, Tuesday through Friday mornings, and its Saturday programs: Heron Watch and Birds of Lake Merritt. We provide training—no experience necessary.

You can download an application at the bottom of this web page: [http://www.sfnature.org/get\\_involved/volunteer.html](http://www.sfnature.org/get_involved/volunteer.html)

Please send your application to: [volunteer@sfnature.org](mailto:volunteer@sfnature.org). We will get back to you shortly.

## Upcoming Events

### Birding for Everyone

First Saturdays: June 5, July 3, and August 7, 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: June 5, July 3, and August 7, 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.

### Great Blue Heron Watch

Our Heron Watch program ended May 15. Please join us next spring!

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