



San Francisco Nature Education is in its 11th year of delivering comprehensive environmental education programs to students from underserved schools in the San Francisco Unified School District.

Executive Director's Corner

Here at San Francisco Nature Education we are so proud of the Lowell and Lincoln HS students who are participating in this year's Bayview Birders Program at Heron's Head Park.

The interns' first tours on January 15th were an enormous success. Folks on the tours praised their enthusiasm, knowledge, speaking skills, and expertise with the spotting scopes. The interns were pleased with the accolades, and look forward to engaging with the public on the tours scheduled for February 5th and March 5th.

In March we begin training our middle-school students to serve as interns at Heron Watch, our Saturday program that provides breathtaking views of the Great Blue Herons and their chicks. The students will learn all about their life cycle and behaviors.

They will also learn about the other nesting birds at Stow Lake. The interns are prepared to co-lead public tours, and to use spotting scopes to display activity in the nests. Applications for interns are available on our web site (see page 3).

We welcome donations to help underwrite our intern-led programs. Our basic membership is only \$30. Please help us continue our mission of educating students to the diversity of wildlife right here in San Francisco!

Best regards, **Nancy DeStefanis**

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Future Naturalists at Work

Blue Heron Newsletter • February 2011

Heron's Head Park Public Tours Begin

Kat, Bayview Birders Intern



January 15th was a pleasantly sunny and warm day, despite the freezing temperatures we have had all month. We prepared for our tours at first by heading around the park with our instructors, Maryann Rainey and Angela Tremolada. Then we met up with SF Nature Education executive director Nancy DeStefanis. We were all a bit nervous for the first tour of the season, but we picked up our scopes and got ready to go.

Since we had time before our scheduled tour, my partner Calvin and I set out with our scopes to show birds to the first tour groups. Luckily for us we found a **Great Blue Heron** right away! The heron sat in a hunting position for probably twenty minutes before it walked away, which the public thought was very interesting. Later we began our own tour.

At first we saw many **Greater Scaups**, which usually stay in groups. We also saw groups of **Ruddy Ducks**, and among them was a **Common Goldeneye**, which isn't as common as it might sound. Interns Alex and Kenneth had it in the scope, and Calvin and I showed our visitors as well. The Goldeneye is one of the last birds to migrate south for winter, which could be why we don't see it too often.

Along the shore we saw a handful of **Willet**s pecking for food with a **Whimbrel** among them. Later, we saw a **Greater Yellowlegs** as well. At the end of the day, when we were about to leave, a birder pointed out a **Cooper's Hawk** sitting on a lamppost. It was really a treat to see a hawk so near the end of the day, and we were all very excited.

After the tour Calvin and I lead, one of our guests, Pauline Yeckley, came by to talk about the tour. She first complimented us for carrying the heavy scopes on the trip, and she also said, "Calvin has good luck. He wanted to see **Pelicans** and two minutes later they came!" I enjoyed my tour with the two of you."

Hopefully Calvin's luck comes in handy on the rest of the tours! Overall it was quite a good day, as altogether we saw 38 different species, along with the favorite Great Blue Heron.

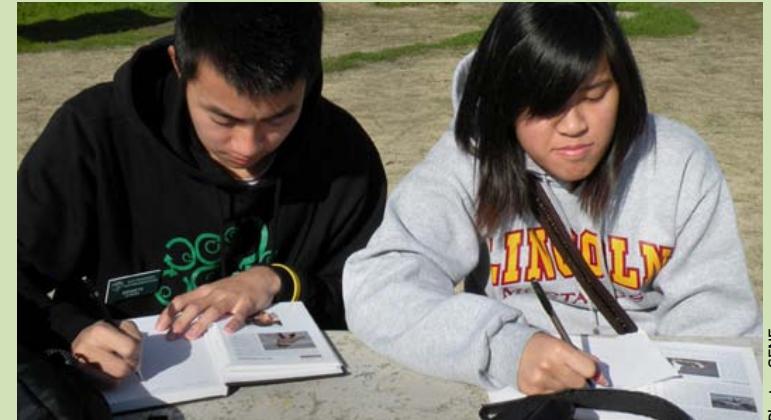


Megan Prelinger, SF Nature board president (center), and interns Kenneth and Alex (right) wait for others to join them on the tour.

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Interns are equipped and ready to lead the first public tours of the season.



After the tours interns Kenneth and Lisa sketch birds they spotted.

Photo: SFNE



Calvin and Kat flank an enthusiastic participant.



Intern Calvin steadies scope for Mina while her father looks on.

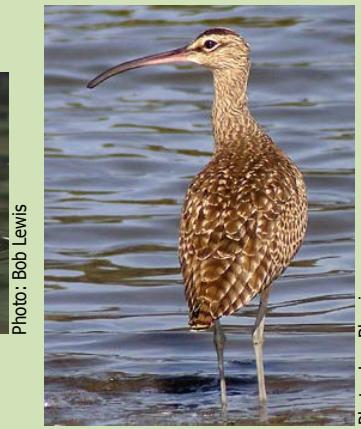
Photo: SFNE



Interns Kat and Calvin (third & second from right) enjoy the sunny day with their group.



Common Goldeneye



Whimbrel

Photo: Len Blumkin

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Photo: SFNE

Arty and Eddy (in neckties, voted best-dressed interns) and two members of their group meet near the EcoCenter.



Photo: Judy Harter



Photo: SFNE

Calvin, in foreground, reviews species list with other interns and MaryAnn Rainey.



Photo: SFNE

Yvonne and Lisa (second & third from left) lead their tour with three participants.



Photo: Just Chaos

Greater Scaup

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Upcoming Events

Heron's Head Park Tours

Selected Saturdays: February 5 and March 5, 2011.

Tours: 10, 10:30, 11, last tour at 11:30 am. Allow at least one hour for the tour.

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

Donation: Free, donations welcome.

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

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

Birding for Everyone

First Saturdays: February 5, March 5, and April 2, 2011, 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. See note below re: Botanical Garden fee.

Birding for Kids and their Families

First Saturdays: February 5, March 5, and April 2, 2011, 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). Each family: \$10; See note below re: Botanical Garden fee.

For nonresidents of San Francisco there is now an entry fee to the SF Botanical Garden, with discounts for children, families, seniors, and students. The complete fee schedule can be seen [here](#).

Volunteers Needed for School Program!

Please visit www.sfnature.org/get_involved for information about how to apply.

Volunteers Needed for Heron Watch!

Volunteers needed for Heron Watch at Stow Lake. Application available at www.sfnature.org/get_involved.



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Great Blue Herons Continue to Arrive at Stow Lake

Nancy DeStefanis, Executive Director, SFNE

Six herons have already arrived at Heron Island in Stow Lake for the annual nesting season! Two nests are occupied in the tree on the farthest right (observing from Jennie's Bench, near the path and south of the Stow Lake boathouse), and one nest is occupied in a tree to the left.

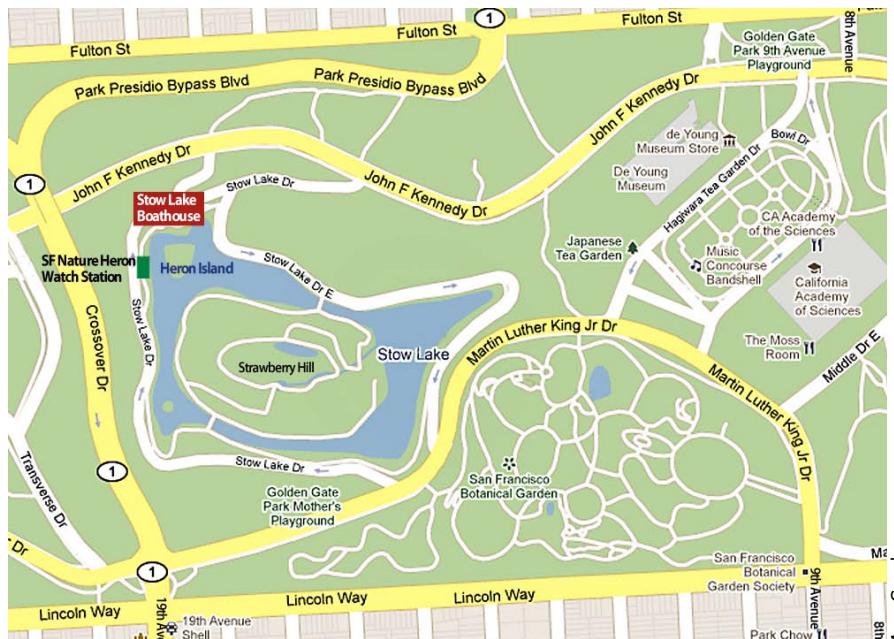
Last year, six nests were occupied by a total of ten fledglings. There is still time for additional herons to arrive and find partners.

February is one of the most exciting times of the nesting season because the herons are busy renovating old nests or constructing new ones. Courtship

to establish the pair bond is intense. Behaviors like twig presentation, mutual preening, bill dueling, and mating are always exciting to observe.

San Francisco Nature Education has been collecting data on the colony since 1993. During 18 years of nesting, the colony has produced 139 fledglings. The San Francisco colony is the most visible in the Bay Area. At Heron Island the birds are easily observed from the path that encircles Stow Lake and from Strawberry Island as well.

Heron Watch, our yearly Saturday program, begins on April 9th, and continues for six weeks. As always, middle school interns will staff the scopes and help lead tours. I look forward to seeing you at Stow Lake!



Beginning Saturday, April 9th, and continuing every Saturday through May 14th, from 10 am–1 pm, SF Nature will be at Stow Lake, south of the boathouse, watching the heron nests on Heron Island.



Photo: © Monte Travis

This Great Blue Heron has been a regular at Stow Lake for about five years. We know him because he always arrives early in the season and stakes out an existing nest. We are able to identify him because he's been injured and his tongue protrudes. The injury has not prevented successful nesting.

Bird Identification Challenge



Photo: Just Chaos



Photo: Doug Greenberg



Photo: Len Blumkin



Photo: Alan Vernon