



Executive Director's Corner

Happy New Year!

Thanks to all who contributed to our end of the year appeal. We greatly appreciate your donations that support our school and public programs.

This year marks our eleventh anniversary of delivering outdoor environmental education programs to students in underserved elementary schools and to the general public in our popular Saturday programs.

Please join us on one of our upcoming birding tours of the San Francisco Botanical Garden or Heron's Head Park.

And thanks again for your support.

Best regards,

Nancy DeStefanis



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Getting Ready for Public Tours at Heron's Head Park

Jenny, Bayview Birders Intern



On the morning of December 5th, 2010, at Heron's Head Park in San Francisco, high school interns were divided into two groups, to be led by nurse Maryann Rainey and naturalist Angela Tremolada. The weather was scattered showers at high tide. We observed birds from 9:30 until noon.

The most surprising thing that happened that day was that Nurse Rainey's group saw a **Harlequin Duck**.



Harlequin Duck

Photo: Rick Leche

Angela's group saw a **Belted Kingfisher**. The Belted Kingfisher is unique for its blue-gray back, wings, and tail; white chin, neck, and throat; its large head with shaggy crest; a long, heavy bill; and

its small feet. We were fortunate to have seen this bird, because its numbers are declining due to habitat loss.

We came across a **Horned Grebe** in the bay. They are small with a stocky body; the upper parts are dark with a fluffy rump, short, thin black bill with white tip. Parents eat their own feathers and feed them to chicks to protect their stomachs

from fish bones. We also saw **Common Ravens**. Similar to the American Crow, a raven is a bigger bird, has a thicker neck, and vocalizes differently. Other species spotted were **American Wigeon**, **Western Grebe**, and **Say's Phoebe**.



Belted Kingfisher

Photo: Judy Harter

The weather was not great, but we were lucky to see a total of 42 species of birds, as compiled by Yvonne. We also had time to practice our *Twelve Days of Birding* song, thanks to Arty, who helped us with the words (as some of us are new to Bayview Birders).

We had a good day of bird watching. It was nice to see not only interns but many people who had come to Heron's Head Park with their families to view native and migrating species.

As we walked along the path near the marshes we spotted beehives among the native plants. We noticed that California poppies and other wildflowers were in bloom.

Before leaving, the interns sat on large stones while they checked off seen birds in their journals, and sketched their favorite ones from the day's tour.

Interns and Instructors Tour Heron's Head Park

Eddy, Bayview Birder Intern



November 20th was a fairly cold Saturday. It came as no surprise that our group encountered a large variety of birds despite the very cold temperature at Heron's Head Park. Lowell High School interns met up at the parking

lot to begin training with our instructors: Nancy DeStefanis, Angela Tremolada, and Len Blumin.



Photo: SFNE
Interns Kat, Yvonne (at scope), Kenneth, and Calvin search SF Bay for birds.

We began with a brief discussion of what was going to occur during our morning tour of the park. Shortly after our discussion we began our birdwatching with our magnificent scopes near the shore. First we spotted **Double-crested Cormorants** resting on the rocks and diving for fish. The next few hours we walked the path through the park and saw different bird species as we passed by.

Halfway through our walk we were treated again to the presence of **Black-bellied Plovers** that numbered about 50, and soon afterwards we spotted another common bird, the **Willet**. However, we had more sightings of **Western Gulls** than any other birds.



Photo: Len Blumin
Willet

One of our instructors, Nancy DeStefanis, demonstrated the way an expert handles the spotting scope. She had us practice the technique one by one. Ms. D. also managed to get some interns to identify different birds through

the scope to increase our knowledge of Heron's Head Park's diversity.

Finally we moved to the shoreline to examine the different types of vegetation that the birds feed on. Our guest instructor, Mr. Blumin, skillfully described each type of plant, and made clear what was edible and tasty.

We ended the trip by listing the birds we observed. One rare species was noted: **White-tailed Kite**. The total number of observed species for the day was 40. Special thanks to Kat for compiling our list. Highlights include: **Surf Scoter**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Clark's Grebe**, **Eared and Horned Grebes**.

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Photo: Doug Greenberg
Say's Phoebe



Photo: Len Blumin
White-tailed Kite



Photo: SFNE
Interns Kat and Arty review their bird checklists.



Photo: SFNE
Instructor Len Blumin (second from left) with interns and Angela Tremolada (far right), SFNE naturalist, at a chilly Heron's Head.

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Thanks to the efforts of our instructors, with our new scoping and identification skills we were one step closer to leading public tours. Heron's Head tours begin on Saturday, January 15th. We hope to see you there!



Photo: Rick Leche

Red-breasted Merganser



Photo: SFNE

Len Blumin supervises Eddy's scope practice.



Photo: Doug Greenberg

Surf Scoter

Bird Identification Can Be a Challenge!



Photo: Len Blumin

Western Grebe



Photo: Doug Greenberg

Clark's Grebe



Photo: Len Blumin

Horned Grebe



Photo: Chuq Von Rospach

Eared Grebe

Upcoming Events

Heron's Head Park Tours

Selected Saturdays: January 15, 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 and March 5, 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 and March 5, 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 for information about how to apply.

First Great Blue Heron Arrives at Stow Lake

Tina Lui, SFNE Naturalist



Naturalist Linda Grant and I visited Stow Lake on Wednesday, January 5th, to see if any Great Blue Herons had returned to their nesting site. We were rewarded when we spotted an adult heron standing on a branch in the middle of Heron Island, opposite the Stow Lake boathouse.

The first Great Blues generally arrive at the heron colony each year between December 25th and January 10th. More herons arrive throughout January and February to commence courtship activities. These are exciting months to observe mating behavior.

In March, herons incubate their eggs by sinking very low upon their nests, which are so high in the trees that most people have no idea herons are nesting at Stow Lake.



Photo: © Monte Travis

Heron with chick at Stow Lake, spring 2010.



Photo: © Monte Travis

A Great Blue Heron on Heron Island at Stow Lake.

Our yearly program, *Heron Watch*, begins Saturday, April 16th, and continues on the following six Saturdays through May 21st. The observation site will be staffed from 10 am to 1 pm. Middle- and high-school interns will make a spotting scope available for visitors to take advantage of any sightings of herons, chicks, feedings, and ram-bunctious behavior high atop the trees.

Last year twelve herons built six nests, and we watched ten chicks fledge in June and July. We look forward to seeing *you* this spring at Stow Lake. Look for the SF Nature group on the path just south of the Stow Lake boathouse. We will be the people looking skyward through binoculars.

Birding for Kids and their Families

Linda Grant, SFNE Naturalist

On February 5th, 2011, we will begin our second year of offering a Saturday children's program: *Birding for Kids and their Families*. This program is designed for children ages 5-12 and their families or caretakers.

We meet at 10 am on the first Saturday of each month at the main gate of the SF Botanical Garden, near 9th Avenue and Lincoln Way. The trip ends at noon. Rain cancels the walk.

We provide binoculars and field journals so everyone has an exciting outing. We request a small fee of \$10 from each family. I hope to see you soon!



Photo: SFNE

Naturalist Tina Lui spots lone heron at Stow Lake.