



Executive Director's Corner

Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for supporting the 20th Anniversary of Heron Watch. We had a wonderful celebration and honored our volunteers. Please see Logan Kahle's remarks on page 4. He received the Outstanding Intern Award for 2010-2013.

This spring we will recruit about ten interns for our Heron Watch Interpretive Program. We have invited Logan to be one of our trainers. Also, we are working with Mike Smylie of ERM Corporation to install a Webcam aimed at Heron Island nests.

We have planned the next four months of field trips with leaders Megan Prelinger, Alan Hopkins, and Logan Kahle. Please check the *Upcoming Events* column for dates of trips to the Chain of Lakes, Crissy Field, Lake Merced, Heron's Head Park, and Glen Canyon. Our Saturday trips are two hours long in order to fit into a busy weekend. If you have suggestions for other trips in SF, please send them to me at nancyd@sfnature.org.

Our Birding for Kids program continues on November 2nd. This nature walk is ideal for kids 4 to 10. Please help us to get the word out. We are expanding the program from four to eight months. Watch the newsletter for upcoming dates.

I hope you will continue to support us in providing environmental education to youth in San Francisco. The stewards of tomorrow desperately need field trips and a grounding in natural history if they are to protect and conserve the planet. We start young and cultivate a lifelong interest in local and global stewardship. Membership is only \$30.

Best regards,

Nancy



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Birding for Everyone in October

Megan Prelinger, Naturalist



Saturday, October 5th, was a warm, sunny day in the SF Botanical Garden. We had nine birders in our group. At the entrance we got our first look at the fall migration with two **Yellow Warblers** and two **Townsend's Warblers** in the trees above the gate.

On the main lawn was a flock of sixty migrating **Canada Geese**. We logged some of the most regularly seen species on our way toward the Waterfowl Pond: **Anna's Hummingbird**, **American Robin**, and **Rock Dove**. A **Red-tailed Hawk** perched in a tall cypress and called loudly.

In the pond, **Mallards** were joined by a returning **American Coot**. In the Cloud Forest we saw a flock of **Dark-eyed Juncos**, and a flock of **Bushtits**, and we heard **Song Sparrows** calling. In the Moon-viewing Garden a **Western Gull** flew over from the direction of Stow Lake, and **Steller's Jays** scolded each other in the trees above.



Hermit Thrush

A pair of **Common Ravens** flew overhead, and we remarked that this species is usually seen singly or in pairs when flying—rarely in flocks. Above the Succulent Garden **Scrub Jays** chattered in the trees, and we saw our first **Brown Creeper** of the day and a flock of **Chestnut-backed Chickadees**. A **Cooper's Hawk** flew into the Redwood Grove and disappeared.

The excitement picked up at the reservoir, where a **Hermit Thrush** flashed briefly through the under-story, and we had long sightings of **Pygmy Nuthatches** combing the hanging pinecones above our heads.

In the overhanging trees was a **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, and we heard the call of a **Belted Kingfisher**. We noticed that there were far more butterflies and dragonflies in the garden on that warm day than we usually see on our *Birding for Everyone* walks.

Our day took a vivid turn in the California garden. There we got a view of a new arrival, a **Golden-crowned Sparrow**. A **Ruby-crowned**



Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Photo: Jerry Oldenettel

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The *Birding for Everyone* group in the SF Botanical Garden on October 5th.

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Kinglet appeared, and a pair of **Black Phoebes** began calling. The most interesting sighting of the day was of **American Goldfinches** and **Western Tanagers**. It was noteworthy to see a male and female of each species—all in pale winter plumage—in adjacent trees for easy comparison.

While we studied the tanagers and the goldfinches we saw a **Snowy Egret** swooping into a small pond. Then a **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** displayed and called in the blackberry bushes. On the walk back to the entry gate we saw more **Townsend's Warblers**, but the day belonged to all those **tanagers** and **goldfinches**.



Black Phoebe

Photo: Judy Harter



American Goldfinch

Photo: Doug Greenberg



Western Tanager

Photo: SFNE

Photo: Rick Leche



Pacific Slope Flycatcher

Photo: Len Blumin

Upcoming Events*

Birding for Everyone: first Saturday of every month. Upcoming walks led by Megan Prelinger: Nov. 2 and Dec. 7, 10 am–noon. Meet in front of SF Botanical Garden bookstore, 9th Ave. near Lincoln.

SF Nature fees: Adults \$10, children free; SF Botanical Garden fees below. Please bring binoculars if you can, and a pencil.

Birding for Kids and Families: Saturday Nov. 2, led by Christine Malfatti; Dec. 7, by Nancy DeStefanis, 10–11:30 am. Meet at the SF Botanical Garden bookstore, 9th Ave. near Lincoln. Adults \$10 each, children free.

SF Botanical Garden Admission: FREE for all SF residents with proof of residency; nonresidents pay varying fees. See the [Garden's Web site](#) for details.

Birding Chain of Lakes: Saturday, Nov. 16, led by Alan Hopkins, 10 am–noon. Adults \$10, children free. Meet at parking lot on Chain of Lakes Drive next to Middle Lake. From the north, enter at 43rd Ave.; from the south, at 41st Ave. Muni buses stop on Fulton. Map: <http://goo.gl/maps/LoAIU>

*Please see our new online [events calendar](#).

Volunteers Needed for 2013–2014 School Program!

Please visit www.sfnature.org/get_involved for information.

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Rick Quisol accompanies Nancy singing *Ukulele Lady*.

Photo: Bill Milestone

Celebrating 20 Years of Heron Watch

Judy Harter, Editor of *The Blue Heron*

On October 8th, SF Nature Education celebrated the 20th anniversary of its Stow Lake Heron Watch program. Friends, supporters, volunteers, and honorees gathered at SF's Mercy High School for a party, speeches, and a silent auction to benefit SF Nature Education.

Guests mingled over wine and hors d'oeuvres, and enjoyed music by local duo Frisky Frolics, who accompanied Nancy DeStefanis when she sang an ukulele song for the delighted group. Attendees wrote their bids for silent auction items that included binoculars and a spotting scope, paintings, dinners at local restaurants, nature books, and framed photographs of the great blue heron colony.

SFNE board president Bill Milestone welcomed guests and introduced Claudia Jeung, former Principal of Jean Parker Elementary School and member of the SFNE advisory board. Claudia gave a rousing introduction to Nancy DeStefanis, the organization's executive director and the evening's honoree. She pointed out that Nancy's birthplace—Brooklyn—played an enormous part in Nancy's *joie de vivre* in founding the school program.

Nancy stated that not only were we celebrating 20 years of Heron Watch, but also thirteen years of taking thousands of underserved children out into nature. She talked about the 20-year adventure of discovering the Great Blue Heron colony and introducing thousands of people to the birds in our parks. Growing the intern program was a special pleasure, as was watching those students become confident in their newly-learned identification skills.

Nancy introduced the evening's other honorees and presented each one with a framed picture of the Great Blue Heron colony by photographers James Sullivan and Jesse Krider. Recipients included: Judy Harter, newsletter editor; Logan Kahle, intern; Mike Smylie, Heron Watch volunteer; Megan Prelinger, Constance Armitage, Linda Grant, Missi Hirt, and Sharon Pretti, all naturalists and trip leaders. Honorees Peter Shen, Webmaster, and Sandi Wong, photographer, were unable to attend.

Later, winners of the silent auction and a binocular raffle were announced by Belinda Head, secretary of SF Nature Education. Volunteers, board members, and supporters were able to get better acquainted and express their appreciation for the work of all the evening's honorees.



Linda Grant with Pat Kearns.



Susie Geran with Don McMahan.

Photos: Ed Lee for SFNE



Bill Milestone, board president, presents Nancy with flowers.



Claudia Jeung with Nancy.



Connie and Gary Armitage with Nancy.

An Appreciation of SF Nature Education Logan Kahle, Intern

On October 8th, Logan thanked SF Nature Education and executive director Nancy DeStefanis for his Outstanding Intern Award, received at the 20th Anniversary Celebration of Heron Watch. As SFNE board president Bill Milestone said, "With systems science in his back pocket and a new hat on his head, Logan is set to become the Indiana Jones of ornithology." Below are Logan's remarks.



Thank you for this honor. When I was in second grade, I was a normal kid leading a traditional life. At that time I stumbled into the world of birds, which would change my life forever.

I was introduced to the subject in a classroom, where I learned some of the amazing properties of birds, such as their ability to survive in almost any climate, their unique feathers, their varied and

complex songs, and their intricate behaviors. Field trips brought light to these concepts, and I was soon hooked on birding.

I began ravenously reading bird books and looking around my neighborhood for birds, and soon started setting aside time on the weekends for birding. This newly-found passion started occupying larger and larger chunks of time. As luck would have it, my parents and I decided that I should be home-schooled. With that newly-gained freedom, I started bicycling all over the Bay Area in search of rare and exotic birds.

Since that time I have acted as a chummer—a person who throws popcorn, fish oil, and other treats off a boat to bring in birds—on pelagic trips; worked at the California Academy of Sciences; and spearheaded a study on bird window collisions. I presented the preliminary results of this paper at an ornithological conference. I have helped to lead community and youth walks for Golden Gate Audubon and Presidio Trust.

More than three years ago I heard about San Francisco Nature Education, and I quickly signed up for Ms. D's Heron Watch program at Stow Lake. Under her tutelage my communication skills greatly improved. I was able to comfortably lead visitors to see Great Horned Owls and Great Blue Herons.

Ms. D encouraged me to continue my birding education by becoming an intern in the Heron's Head Park program. Here I felt even more in my element, as I was able to show people all the varied bird species that we see in this small shoreline park. Not only did I expand my knowledge in terms of learning the ecology of this natural gem, but I also learned life skills, such as being on time.

Perhaps the most important aspect of SF Nature's work is the promotion and execution of citizen science. I am a strong proponent, and believe it can be revolutionary due to the sheer quantity of data that programs now are able to obtain. For example, I am involved in two citizen science projects: eBird and Christmas Bird Counts.

Raising awareness of the local environment is another important contribution of SF Nature. When people understand the dazzling variety of the bird habitats in and around San Francisco, they are much more likely to support conservation efforts.

I am extraordinarily grateful to Ms. D and the enthusiastic volunteers who have helped create this great resource for San Francisco.



Logan Kahle and Nancy DeStefanis display a heron picture gift.



Logan Kahle with parents Brewster Kahle and Mary K. Austin.



Sharon Pretti and Richard Goldberg.

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Photos: Ed Lee for SFNE



Nancy with Missi Hirt and her partner Aaron.



Past president Mary Rose Cassa.



Naturalist Alan Hopkins with Nancy.



Rick Quisol of Frisky Frolics playing the ukulele.

Photo: Bill Milestone



SFNE honorees: Judy Harter, Megan Prelinger, Logan Kahle, Sharon Pretti, Nancy, Mike Smylie, Missi Hirt, Linda Grant, and Connie Armitage.

Photos: Ed Lee for SFNE

Celebrating 20 Years of Heron Watch



Renate & Terry Kenaston and granddaughter Emma Bond with Nancy.



Jeff and Judy Harter with Nancy.



Logan Kahle holds his hat for the raffle drawing with Belinda Head, SFNE secretary.



Photos: Grace W. Ruth

Birding at El Polín Spring in the Presidio



Song Sparrow



American Kestrel



House Finch and White-crowned Sparrow



Northern Flicker



Common-Checkered Skipper



Cackling Goose

Photo: Rick Leche



House Finch and Lesser Finch

Birding the Presidio's El Polín Spring

Logan Kahle, Intern

At the October 19th walk to El Polín Spring we were blessed with great weather and great birds. We started at the parking lot, where we found several **Northern Flickers**, **Townsend's Warblers**, and other interesting birds to entertain us.

We then looked into the reedy areas by the ponds. This newly-restored dunes area is a favorite of sparrows, and we found dozens of **White-crowned** and **Golden-crowned Sparrows** in the low vegetation. With some persistence, we were all able to see a **Lincoln's Sparrow** too, an uncommon but regular winter resident at this spot. In addition to the Lincoln's Sparrow, we heard a **Common Yellowthroat**—another uncommon bird for this spot—give its distinctive buzzy call.

We walked around the loop, looking into the willow seeps that often attract migratory birds.

The presence of water is a real draw to many species; all around the seeps are dry grasslands. In the pine forest we heard the distinctive bell-like, staccato call of the **Golden-crowned Kinglet**.

We continued on to the dry grasslands. There we found no less than three **Say's Phoebes**, an amazing count for the Presidio! Typically it is very uncommon to see even one Say's Phoebe at this site.

We looped around and headed back toward the parking lot. We had seen many southbound **Canada Geese** fly over. Then we encountered another flock of Canada Geese, but this time there were two **Cackling Geese** among them. I knew the Cackling Geese from their smaller size and shorter necks compared to the Canada Geese, and from the white collar around the neck. Cackling Geese are scarce anywhere in San Francisco, especially inland.

When we arrived back at the parking lot we could hear distant **Fox Sparrows** singing, which reminded us of the great walk we'd just had. We saw 36 species.



Open Wide

A lucky Pied-billed Grebe chick at Stow Lake gets a fresh meal, but will that big crayfish go down a narrow gullet?



Photos by Sandi Wong

