



## Executive Director's Corner

Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for responding to our year-end appeal for funds to support our programs for underserved schools, interns, and Saturday public programs.

I also want to wish you a very happy and healthy new year.

We have already scheduled Saturday walks at the SF Botanical Garden, Heron's Head Park, and Crissy Field. Additional walks are planned for March.

Heron Watch begins on April 12th, and continues through May 17th, so mark your calendars. The new year marks our 21st year of heron watching!

We celebrate our nature photographer Sandy Wong for two years of exceptional photos in our monthly newsletter. With Sandy on board we can offer exciting photos of local birds of the Bay Area.

We also celebrate our Great Blue Heron photographers James Sullivan and Jesse Krider for their outstanding photos of the Great Blue Heron colony since 2004.

We thank our School Program, Heron Watch, and Saturday Program leaders: Linda Grant, Connie Armitage, Jeanne Crawford, Missi Hirt-Gavic, Alan Hopkins, Anne Galjour, Marty Hackett, Chris Malfatti, Bill Milestone, Diane Piagneri, Mike Smylie, Candace Xanttopoulos, and our longtime interns Logan and Mina. The gift of their time and expertise is truly outstanding and generous.

Finally we thank our fantastic newsletter editor Judy Harter and our webmaster Peter Shen.

If you haven't yet renewed or joined, membership is only \$35.

Best regards,

*Nancy*

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## Birding for Everyone in December

Megan Prelinger, Naturalist

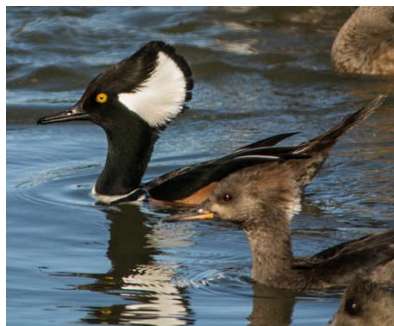


There were seven of us ready to brave the early cold snap to see birds on December 6th. Temperatures were in the forties for the early part of our walk, before the sun warmed things up. We started in the Fragrance Garden, where there were two

species of sparrows—**Fox and Song Sparrows**—dabbling in the fountain. Our first **Black Phoebes** of the day graced the trees and garden walls.

As we walked over to the Waterfowl Pond, a flock of **Canada Geese** flew over our heads and landed in the water. For a few minutes the other birds scattered and hid, but when the water calmed we were rewarded with some winter delights: hopping and flitting on the rocks and boughs were **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, giving everyone good views of this common wintering species.

In the water three **Hooded Mergansers**, two female and one male, appeared first alongside the geese, and then a lone female **Bufflehead** surfaced. **American Coots** were abundant, **Mallards**, and one **Domestic Duck**. Most striking was the sudden appearance of two very small ducks—a pair of female **Green-winged Teals**. This species is an



Hooded Mergansers



Female Bufflehead

Photo: Doug Greenberg

uncommon winter visitor to the city, and we were thrilled to get a look at them. If one of the birds had been male he would have his breeding plumage at this time of year.

These birds matched the female patterns of delicate dappled-brown striping with a buffy patch on the undertail coverts and the eponymous bright green speculum. We spent a few minutes observing these smallest of North American dabbling ducks.



Female Green-winged Teal

Photo: Rick Leche

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Photo: Chris Malfatti

The Birding for Everyone group in the SF Botanical Garden, December 6th.

From the bridge over the Waterfowl Pond we watched a **Red-shouldered Hawk** chase a **Red-tailed Hawk**. We heard both of them vocalize at different times and noted the distinction between the two-note call of the Red-shouldered Hawk and the one-note call of the Red-tailed Hawk. Two **American Ravens** flew overhead as we walked toward the Andean Cloud Forest, and we got our first close views of the day of **Anna's Hummingbirds**.

In the Cloud Forest we found **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**, **American Robins**, and flyover **Rock Pigeons**. Along the path behind the Moon-Viewing Garden

we saw **White-crowned** and **Golden-crowned Sparrows**. In the vicinity of the Succulent Garden we had the opportunity to see two wintering **Varied Thrushes**, a **Purple Finch** in a redwood tree, and our first **Townsend's Warbler** of the day.



Photo: Andy Purviance

Varied Thrush

Overhead flew Western and California Gulls. In front of us, as we walked toward the Redwood Grove, darted one very small and quick **Pacific Wren**, and above the path was a **Steller's Jay**. In the California Native Plant Garden we finally got good looks at a **Hermit Thrush**, and there were **Dark-eyed Juncos** and **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** in the trees. We had a brief look at a winter **Nashville Warbler**. On our way out at the end of this exciting trip **American Crows** flew overhead, and a **Scrub Jay** scolded from the trees.



Photo: Rick Leche

Steller's Jay



Photo: Jerry Oldenettel

Nashville Warbler



Photo: Len Blumin

Fox Sparrow



Photo: Jerry Oldenettel

Townsend's Warbler

## San Francisco Nature Education Heron Watch Internships Available

Every spring, San Francisco Nature Education volunteers show the public the nesting Great Blue Herons and their chicks at Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park. This year we have openings for eight high school students to be trained as interns for our Heron Watch program.

Interns will receive two Saturday training sessions in March and April. During April and May, these interns, along with adult volunteers, will use spotting scopes to show the nesting herons to the public, answer questions, and team up to lead short walking tours of other nesting birds at Stow Lake.

Students will receive community service hours, training in the life cycle of the Great Blue Heron, and will be taught identification skills for observing local birds.

In addition to the two Saturdays of training, each student must participate in five of the six Saturdays of our Heron Watch public program from April 12th to May 17th. Each intern who satisfactorily completes the program will receive a good pair of binoculars and documentation of their participation from SF Nature Education.

For an application and more information please visit us at [www.sfnature.org](http://www.sfnature.org).



Great Blue Heron

Photo: © 2012 San Francisco Nature Education, courtesy James Sullivan

### Upcoming Events\*

**SF Nature fees for all walks: Adults \$10, children free.** Please bring binoculars if you can, and a pencil.

**Birding for Everyone: first Saturday of every month.** Jan. 4 and Feb. 1 walks will be led by Megan Prelinger: 10 am-noon. Meet at SF Botanical Garden bookstore, 9th Ave. near Lincoln.

**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 Crissy Field:** Saturday, Feb. 15, 10 am-noon, with Megan Prelinger. Meet at warming hut at Crissy Field. Naturalist will bring scope.

**Heron's Head Park:** Saturdays, Jan. 11 & Feb. 22: Tours led by Logan Kahle and volunteers leave at 10, 10:30, & 11 am. Volunteers will have spotting scopes. Meet at entrance to path. Adults \$10; children free.

**Birding for Kids and Families:** No walks in January or February; program resumes in March.

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

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Photo: Mike Smylie

The SF Nature Heron Watch information station at Stow Lake in May 2013.



### Clapper Rails

Long-legged and long-beaked Clapper Rails were recently seen and photographed in the Palo Alto Baylands by Sandi Wong.





## **Burrowing Owls**

These burrowing owls were spotted near a golf course in Vacaville.

Photos by Sandi Wong

