



# The Blue Heron

News from San Francisco Nature Education ♦ April 2015

## Executive Director's Corner

Dear Friends,

Any day now we can expect the pale blue heron's eggs in two nests to hatch! Because the nests are so deep it will take about a week for the hatchlings to grow large enough to peer over the nest, and for us to get a good look at them.

At times we have heard the hatchlings, with their tiny squawks, before we can see them. Because they grow so fast we will be able to see them when they're about one week old.

Our Heron Cam is the only one in California, and possibly in the entire US. Cornell's heron nest fell down last year, and to date the herons have not built a new one. Please see my updated blog every week.

Students are now able to follow the activity live from their own classrooms! We have contacted schools in San Francisco inviting them to participate in our online activities while students watch the herons raise their young.

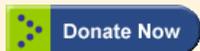
We are in the midst of a fundraising campaign to raise \$15,000 by April 30th, to cover our expenses for the new Heron Cam and the expanded Heron Watch program. We have received a matching grant of \$2,500.

Please give generously so that we may reach our goal.

I look forward to seeing you at Heron Watch and remember to check out all the action on our Heron Cam! See the link on page 4.

Best regards,

Nancy DeStefanis



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## Heron Cam Goes Live—Four Nests! Nancy DeStefanis, Executive Director



The SF Nature Heron Cam is now live and focused on four nests on Heron Island at Stow Lake. Thanks to Fog City Alarms for a great job installing the new camera and working closely with Mike Smylie, SF Nature board president, to fine-tune the images.

The Great Blue Herons have cooperated with the new Heron Cam by showing up in force on Heron Island. Four nests are occupied and teeming with activity—herons turning eggs, sitting on eggs, flying in to provide nest relief and flying out to capture fish and gophers.

The male heron who occupied the center nest last year is back at the same nest. We recognize him because he had an injury years ago and as a result his tongue protrudes below the beak and looks like a pencil. We call him "Tongue Guy."

There are still some courtship rituals taking place at the newest nest. The male delivers twigs to the female, who builds the nest. There are a lot of greetings and neck stretches to strengthen the pair bond. Soon they will be engaged full-time in the business of incubation.

The herons turn their eggs every hour or two, so the egg contents do not stick to the shell. The sitting heron may take short breaks without harming the eggs. The partner provides nest relief regularly, freeing up the other to find food nearby.



We have been monitoring the colony weekly and collecting data on the progress at each nest. We expect chicks in time for Opening Day at Heron Watch on April 11th!

The observation site will be open from 10 am to 12:30 every Saturday through May 16th. Please join us to watch the herons through our spotting scopes and learn from our volunteers and interns—free. Follow signs at the Stow Lake Boathouse.

A naturalist will lead a birding walk each Saturday for adults and children. Tours will leave the observation site at 10:15 and return at noon. Field journals will be given to participants while supplies last. Adults, \$10; teens and children free.

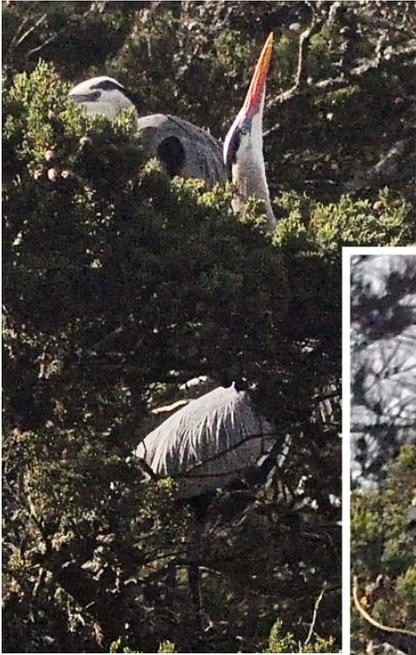
Every Saturday is like a block party when you are watching the herons!!!

### On the pages ahead:

- 2 Four Great Blue Heron Nests on Heron Island!
- 3 Interns Prepare for *Heron Watch*; New Artist in Residence
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## Four Great Blue Heron Nests Are Occupied on Stow Lake's Heron Island!

Photos by Grace Ruth



Above: Great Blue offers a greeting by stretching—notice his or her bright orange beak. (Beaks turn orange during breeding season.)



Photos: © 2015 Grace Ruth



Center and top right: Tongue Guy brings a branch to his partner on nest no. 1. Above: a different Great Blue arrives at its nest. Left: a good view of Tongue Guy (see thin object protruding at bottom of beak like a pencil) as he visits partner.

## Interns Prepare for Heron Watch

Mike Smylie, SF Nature Board President



Anyone who spends time with SF Nature this spring is in for a real treat—we have a great group of very enthusiastic, fun, and energetic interns who will be helping us out throughout the Heron Watch program.

Ben, Fiona, Chiara, and Zed all attend middle or high school in San Francisco.

The interns have been involved in two training sessions so far. In the first, they went on a two-hour birding walk through the SF Botanical Garden with renowned birder Alan Hopkins. This gave them a chance to ask Alan a lot of questions about the many and varied birds they saw during their walk.

On Saturday, March 14th, I had my first opportunity to meet the group, and had a great time getting to know them. We spent time working with the spotting scopes—donated by Eagle Optics—and making sure everyone was comfortable using them. We peppered the interns with questions the public might ask until each member of the group was confident answering them.

Later we took a hike over to Strawberry Hill to see the heron nests from above. We have a lot of early activity in the nests this year, and this really added to everyone's excitement. Even though we are still officially training, we took advantage of some really

spectacular views of the herons and invited the public to take a look through the scopes. The interns did a great job responding to questions.

We finished our walk around Stow Lake with a stop in front of the boathouse, where Nancy gave the interns a quiz on the Great Blue Herons. The group easily aced the test.

The return of the herons to Stow Lake reminds us that it's about time for the start of the Heron Watch program. Having Ben, Fiona, Chiara, and Zed helping us this year, we know it will be a really fun and educational nesting season.



Heron Watch interns: from left, Fiona, Zed, Mike Smylie, Chiara, and Ben.



In the SF Botanical Garden, interns review the 31 birds they spotted on their walk with Alan Hopkins, right.

## SF Nature's New Artist in Residence



My name is Wioleta Kaminska and it is my great pleasure to introduce myself as the artist in residence at SF Nature Education. As part of my artist residence I will write a newsletter column on nature, work as an on-site photographer at the Great Blue Heron colony in Golden Gate Park, and produce a short documentary about Great Blue Herons at Stow Lake.

I am a San Francisco-based designer, artist, filmmaker, writer and educator. I was born and raised in Poland, where I graduated with an MA in applied linguistics, and specialized in methodology of foreign language teaching. Several years ago I set out for the California coast to pursue my dream of art and design. In 2014, I graduated with an MFA in design from California College of the Arts.

In my work I am very interested in exploring our daily environment that we often assume to be predictable and mundane. We live in times when technology and culture interact with each other more than ever. Our contemporary, information-intensive environment shifts our perception of time passing and influences the way we navigate spaces, both physical and virtual.

Through visualizing landscapes where awe and time reside together, my goal is to recreate spaces that intrigue and encourage the viewer to slow down and indulge in a brief moment of contemplation and reflection.

You will often notice a recurring character in my films: Alex, a Great Blue Heron that I have observed for years in the Marina. This exquisite bird has become a metaphor in my work for mindful stillness and a symbol for surviving, adapting, and thriving in an environment that is undergoing a constant change.

Alex means much more to me than just a wild bird or a movie star. He is my faithful follower. Last year he was waiting for me by a runway of Lugano airport in Switzerland, where one of my films, *Fog* (starring Alex), was shown. Then he followed me to Poland and flew over a bus that was taking me to the airport. And yes, I believe it was Alex, and no random Great Blue Heron. Please see my films on Alex at <http://wioletakaminska.com/#/fog/> and <http://wioletakaminska.com/#/symbiosis/>

For more about Alex and my residence at SFNE stay tuned for my column in May. Or visit: [www.wioletakaminska.com](http://www.wioletakaminska.com).

Photos: Wioleta Kaminska

## Birding for Everyone, March 7th

Megan Prelinger, Naturalist



We had a warm, sunny day for our March walk. The Botanical Garden was blooming and busy with people enjoying its sights (and the plant sale). We explored a number of smaller secondary paths on our circuit around

the garden. It was an abundant birding day with a number of highlights.

Several sightings of **Allen's Hummingbirds** confirmed the cusp of spring, and one individual in the Children's Garden perched on a low branch, where we had a long clear look at the bright bronze cheeks, breast, and tail that differentiate it from the year-round resident **Anna's Hummingbird**.



Allen's Hummingbird

Photo: Jerry Oldenettel



Anna's Hummingbird

Photo: Judy Harter

All but one of the raptors sighted were on the wing, including, early in our walk, two **Red-tailed Hawks** pursuing a **Cooper's Hawk** southward above the main lawn. Individuals of both of these resident species were highly visible throughout the walk, as was a perching **Red-shouldered Hawk**.

Another overflight highlight was a **Glaucous-winged Gull** among a flock of circling **Western Gulls**. It circled low enough that we had clear views of the pure white wing tips that differentiate this species from other large gulls. A **California Gull** was perched on the rocks in the Waterfowl Pond.



Pacific Wren

Photo: Grace Ruth

Among passerines, a highlight was a **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** in the Torrey Pine near the reservoir. Chattering **Pygmy Nuthatches**, **Chestnut-backed Chickadees**, and breeding pairs of **Bushtits** rounded out the arboreal species. We saw a late winter **Varied Thrush**, a **Hermit Thrush**, and four species of **sparrows**.

Springtime birdsong accompanied us throughout our walk: calling pairs of **Pacific Wrens**, and one generously perched where we could clearly see it singing.

The song of the **House Finch** infused the garden, and the four-note mini-melody of the **Black Phoebe** was heard in several places, notably near the Waterfowl Pond.



Pacific-slope Flycatcher

Photo: Len Blumin



Megan Prelinger, center, checks her field guide with visitors.

Photo: Grace Ruth

SF Botanical Garden  
03/07/2015

Compiled by:  
Megan Prelinger  
Birds: 37 species

Canada Goose  
Mallard  
Cooper's Hawk  
Red-shouldered Hawk  
Red-tailed Hawk  
American Coot  
California Gull  
Western Gull  
Glaucous-winged Gull  
Rock Dove  
Anna's Hummingbird  
Allen's Hummingbird  
Downy Woodpecker  
Pacific-slope Flycatcher  
Black Phoebe  
Steller's Jay

Scrub Jay  
American Crow  
Common Raven  
Chestnut-backed Chickadee  
Bushtit  
Pygmy Nuthatch  
Pacific Wren  
Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
Hermit Thrush  
American Robin  
Varied Thrush  
Orange-crowned Warbler  
Yellow-rumped Warbler  
Townsend's Warbler  
California Towhee  
Fox Sparrow  
Song Sparrow  
Golden-crowned Sparrow  
White-crowned Sparrow  
Dark-eyed Junco  
House Finch

## Upcoming Events

**SF Nature Walks:** Walks are from 10 am to noon, except at Heron Watch: 10:15 to noon. Please bring binoculars if you can, and a pencil. For directions see our online [events calendar](#).

**Birding for Everyone:** first Saturday of every month, 10 am to noon. Next: Apr. 4, with Megan Prelinger; also May 2. Meet at SF Botanical Garden bookstore, 9th Ave. near Lincoln. SFNE members FREE. \$10 per nonmember adult, children welcome (free).

**SF Botanical Garden Admission:** Free for all SF residents with proof of residency; non-residents pay a fee. See the [garden's website](#) for details.

**Heron Watch:** We will be there Saturdays, April 11, 18 & 25, also May 2, 9 & 16 from 10 to 12:30. Free information and use of spotting scopes staffed by volunteers. Donations welcome. Follow signs from Stow Lake Boathouse. Watch the herons anytime via our live Heron Cam feed: <http://www.sfnature.org/LiveEx/stream.html>.



Join us for a naturalist-led walk for adults and children every Saturday during Heron Watch, 10:15-noon. Adults \$10; teens and children free.

**Special Birding Walks for Families at Heron Watch:** Saturdays, April 18 & May 16, from 10:15-noon. Free field journals while they last. Meet at Heron Watch observation site near Stow Lake Boathouse. For children and parents or guardians. Adults \$10; teens and children free.

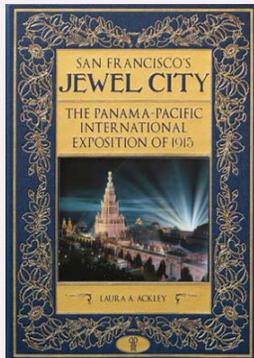
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## Book Review

### *San Francisco's Jewel City: The Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915*



By Laura A. Ackley; 200+ color photographs & illustrations. Heyday Books, 2014. 352 pages/hardcover; \$40. [heydaybooks.com](http://heydaybooks.com)  
Reviewed by Nancy DeStefanis

Called by many the “Last Great World’s Fair,” the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 showed the world that San Francisco was back in business after the devastating earthquake of 1906. Although its theme was ostensibly the opening of

the Panama Canal, civic leaders knew the fair was a real opportunity to encourage investment and tourism in San Francisco.

Laura Ackley’s handsome new book, *San Francisco’s Jewel City: The Panama–Pacific International Exposition of 1915*, published just in time for the fair’s 100th anniversary celebration this year, is an exhaustive study of the preparation and opening of the fair: one mile long, with 630 acres of state and foreign pavilions, and architectural masterpieces that included the Tower of Jewels and Palace of Fine Arts.

More than 200 color photographs depict the beauty and grandeur of the buildings, gardens, entertainment, paintings, sculptures, and fountains. The fair stretched west from Van Ness Avenue, past the Palace of Fine Arts to what is now Crissy Field. Formerly marsh and sand, the buildings were constructed on new landfill. Twenty-four countries participated—despite the Great War’s having started in Europe in 1914. In ten months, more than 18 million people from all over the world visited San Francisco to see the exposition.

The French Pavillion was a reproduction of the Palace of the Legion d’Honneur in Paris. The Italian Towers copied minarets in Spain, but the loggias and sculptures were in keeping with Italian traditions. The Hawaiian Pavilion launched the hula and ukulele crazes in America.

A veritable who’s who of American statesmen, celebrities, artists and innovators visited the fair: Teddy Roosevelt and William Jennings Bryan (they argued over whether the US should enter the war), Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, Luther Burbank, Helen

Keller, Maria Montessori, Madame Schuman Heink, John Philip Sousa, and California’s own Ishi (immortalized in Theodora Kroeber’s seminal work, *Ishi the Last California Indian*) joined the Blackfoot Tribe at their pow-wow.

The fair was a mammoth undertaking, and Ackley does justice to its scale, beauty, and innovation. The heavily illustrated book is a great gift for a friend or yourself!

*Nancy DeStefanis, Executive Director of SF Nature Education, plays the ukulele and lectures regularly on the PPIE. She often visits the Palace of Fine Arts to observe the great blue herons and black-crowned night herons that roost there.*

## Film Review

### *Racing to Zero—In Pursuit of Zero Waste*



Feature documentary, 56 min. Directed by Christopher Beaver. DVD from [Bullfrogfilms.com](http://Bullfrogfilms.com). Reduced rates for activists & grassroots groups.

Reviewed by  
Chris Giorni

Three years ago, Mayor Ed Lee of San Francisco pledged to achieve zero waste by 2020. *Racing to Zero’s* director, Christopher Beaver, goes behind the scenes to follow San Francisco’s trail of trash and to track the possibilities of zero waste.

He made a great discovery. The simple substitution of the word RESOURCE for the word GARBAGE transformed a culture, produced a wealth of new industries, and revealed an intriguing and surprising race to zero.

*Racing to Zero* is a must-see. If San Franciscans can reach zero waste they would be telling the world that it can be done and needs to be done. The film addresses all waste streams: medical waste, nail polish, plastics, medicines, computers, cans, and compost. The list of waste that must be dealt with is daunting.

We follow Robert Haley, Zero Waste Manager for San Francisco (above), as he travels the city high and low to look at how zero waste can be achieved.

## EVENTS & EXHIBITS CELEBRATING THE PANAMA-PACIFIC EXPOSITION OF 1915:

### City Rising: San Francisco and the 1915 World’s Fair

Two different exhibits curated by the California Historical Society:

- California Historical Society, through Dec. 6, 2015; Tues. through Sun. \$5.
- Palace of Fine Arts, now through Jan. 10, 2016. Wed.–Sun., 10 am–5 pm. Free. Enter building near rotunda. Closed Apr. 12–14 and May 13. Check website below to make sure building is not closed for a private event.

### Underground Chinatown—Racism at the Fair,

Apr. 2–Dec. 19, 2015

- Chinese Historical Society, 965 Clay St. between Powell & Stockton. Free. Tues.–Fri., noon–5 pm; Sat., 11–4 pm. An exhibition about a fair attraction that fascinated visitors with false portrayals of Chinese culture.

For a complete list of events see: [ppie100.org](http://ppie100.org).

Young students shown discovering red wigglers in their compost put hope in your heart. The film clearly and cleverly weaves world concerns with the work of a dozen local heroes of recycling.

You will not want to use that black landfill bin ever again. When we win the race to zero you can plant a tree in your old black bin as a living trophy!

I highly recommend *Racing to Zero* for everyone. In schools, this film is a must-watch for classes K-12. Librarians should consider ordering it for their schools.

Visit the film’s website for screening details: [www.trash24.org](http://www.trash24.org).

*Chris Giorni is the founder and director of Tree Frog Treks in San Francisco. He is an avid recycler and composter.*

### THANK YOU TO SF NATURE’S SPONSORS:

**Eagle Optics**, for their generous donation of spotting scopes. [eagleoptics.com](http://eagleoptics.com); 800-289-1132.

**Fireside Camera**, for donating binoculars for our interns. 2117 Chestnut Street, SF. [firesidecamera.com](http://firesidecamera.com); 415-567-8131.

**McHale Financial Services** for tax preparation. Jim McHale is a Certified Public Accountant/Personal Financial Specialist and Certified Financial Planner. He works with businesses, individuals, estates, and trusts. [mchalefinancial.com](http://mchalefinancial.com); 415-731-7011.



## **A New Nest at Stow Lake!**

This pair of herons began building the nest—the fourth one seen this season—around March 14th on Heron Island. Chicks are expected in mid-April.

Photos by Grace Ruth

