



San Francisco Nature Education is in its 15th year of delivering comprehensive environmental education programs to students from underserved schools in the San Francisco Unified School District.

Executive Director's Corner

Dear Friends,

I am writing to ask for your support for our many programs in 2016.

What can you look forward to next year?

As a member, free Saturday nature walks. We offer 27 field trips each year with trained naturalists and small groups.

Members receive a monthly newsletter with stories on conservation, field trips, reviews of nature films and pertinent reading, and spectacular bird photos.

Your donation also funds our K-5 school programs for underserved students, intern programs that have recruited more than 100 students from city schools, and our Heron Cam.

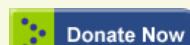
Please consider a significant gift:

- **\$1,000** funds one class for a year of classroom visits and field trips.
- **\$500** funds one student for a winter or spring internship.
- **\$100** funds one Saturday field trip.
- **\$35** for basic membership (**\$30** for seniors).

Please renew your membership and include a gift. Thank you so much.

Best regards,

Nancy DeStefanis



Donate Now

e-mail: info@sfnature.org
telephone: 415-387-9160
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San Francisco, CA 94118

The Blue Heron

News from San Francisco Nature Education • November 2015

Effects of Climate Change on our Doorstep

Nancy DeStefanis, Executive Director

Listening to the news this past weekend, I was sad to learn that more than 1,200 Common Murres had died on Northern California beaches during the months of August and September.

The good news was that 460 live Common Murres (*Uria aalge*) were rescued from beaches by volunteers. Many have been rehabilitated by International Bird Rescue at its San Francisco Bay Center in Fairfield. They release healthy murres at Fort Baker in Sausalito.

The reason for this disaster is that ocean water along our coast has been 5-10 degrees warmer than usual this summer. Because of this warming effect, fish swim to deeper, cooler waters the young murres could not reach. The effect has been a massive starvation and die-off of these pelagic seabirds. It reminded many of the El Niño in 1997-1998.

According to Russ Curtis of Bird Rescue, the Common Murre is an indicator species because these birds respond to any changes in the health of the seas. The starving birds along our coast portend a big El Niño season in 2015-2016.

"These seabirds are telling us that the marine environment is changing," says Curtis. "We should be paying attention."

The Common Murre looks like a small penguin. People often report seeing "little penguins" stranded on Bay Area beaches; what they are really seeing are murres. Unlike penguins, Common Murres can fly.

Murres spend most their lives at sea, except when nesting on rocky cliffs. They are superb divers—essentially "flying" through water by using their wings to propel themselves. They can dive more than 200 feet below the surface to forage.

To learn more: <http://blog.bird-rescue.org/index.php/2015/10/the-release-files-common-murres/>

"For us this is an unprecedented number of exhausted, hungry seabirds at one time," says Curtis. "During this period we usually only get ten of this species a month. To have nearly 500 coming to our center in the past three months is very concerning."

For any doubters of climate change, you don't have to go very far to see the negative impact. Stay tuned for updates on the Paris talks on climate change.



Photo: Cheryl Reynolds,
International Bird Rescue

Common Murres

What to do if you find a live bird on the beach:

While the folks at IBRC are hopeful that the die-off is over, it's good to know what to do if one encounters a starving murre on the beach. Wrap the bird in a sweater or towel and cradle it while depositing in a box with air holes. Do not give it any water or food. Deliver the bird to the closest rehab facility (Wild Care in San Rafael; call first to advise you are coming).

On the pages ahead:

- 2 Birding for Everyone, with Megan Prelinger
- 3 Waterbirds in Golden Gate Park
- 4 *The Big Year* review; Free Lecture; Upcoming Events
- 5 Bathtime for a Red-tailed Hawk

Birding for Everyone, October 3rd

Megan Prelinger, Naturalist



We had a gorgeous crisp, fall day for our October walk. The Monkey's Hand Tree at the main gate was filled with warblers: **Yellow Warblers** and a few **Orange-crowned**. They were similarly attracted to flowering Gingko trees on the lawn.

A **Red-shouldered Hawk** flew over while we were gathering, and a few minutes later we saw three **Red-tailed Hawks** flying together, chasing one another.

At the Fragrance Garden we were stopped in our tracks by a flock of **American Goldfinches** feeding at a bush overhanging the path. It was a mixed group of males, females, and first-fall juveniles. At the main fountain we found a large flock of **Lesser Goldfinches** feeding.

Yellow-rumped Warblers flitted around the Waterfowl Pond, as did **Black Phoebes**, **Song** and **White-crowned Sparrows**, while **Mallards** cruised the water.

In the Australia section we had the opportunity to examine a **Hutton's Vireo** and review features that differentiate it from the Ruby-crowned Kinglet: the absence of a black wing bar, slightly larger bill, and hoarse, blunt voice. A few minutes later we heard a **Hermit Thrush** and spotted two near the path.

The Children's Garden is always a rich spot: we found **House Finches**, **Mourning Doves**, a flock of **Pine Siskins**, and **Townsend's Warblers**. The coniferous trees yielded **Pygmy Nuthatches** and a **Red-breasted Sapsucker**.

On our way to the California Garden a lone **Osprey** flew high above, heading southwest toward Ocean Beach. This species is increasing in numbers throughout the Bay Area. A flock of **Bushtits** chirred and flitted in the vicinity of the library courtyard as we wrapped up the walk.



Lesser Goldfinch
Photo: Grace Ruth



Hutton's Vireo
Photo: Tim Lenz



Townsend's Warbler
Photo: Grace Ruth



Hermit Thrush
Photo: Peter Massas



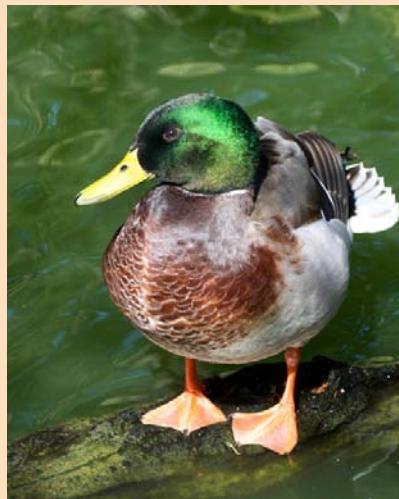
The group ready to start walking. Naturalist Megan Prelinger is second from left.
Photo: Grace Ruth



Red-breasted Sapsucker
Photo: Logan Kahle

SF Botanical Garden
10/03/2015
Compiled by: Megan Prelinger
Birds: 35 species
Turkey Vulture
Canada Goose
Mallard
Osprey
Cooper's Hawk
Red-shouldered Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Western Gull
Rock Dove
Mourning Dove
Anna's Hummingbird
Red-breasted Sapsucker
Black Phoebe
Hutton's Vireo
Steller's Jay

Western Scrub Jay
American Crow
Common Raven
Chestnut-backed Chickadee
Bushtit
Pygmy Nuthatch
Hermit Thrush
American Robin
Orange-crowned Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Townsend's Warbler
California Towhee
Song Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
House Finch
Pine Siskin
Lesser Goldfinch
American Goldfinch



Waterbirds in Golden Gate Park Photos by Sandi Wong

Clockwise from top row:
Snowy Egret at the SF
Botanical Garden's
Wildfowl Pond; Northern
Pintail, female Hooded
Merganser, Pied-billed
Grebe, female Mandarin
Duck (exotic), male Mallard
(center), all at Stow Lake.

Film Review



The Big Year

2011; directed by David Frankel. 100 min. Inspired by *The Big Year*, a book by Mark Obmascik. Available on Netflix.

Reviewed by Michele Hunnewell

In 1998, three men from very different backgrounds attempted to break the record number of bird species counted during the 365 days that comprise the

Big Year. The prize will be recognition by the American Birding Association as that year's birding champion of North America.

Two of the birders (Steve Martin and Jack Black) compete with a funny Owen Wilson as the reigning champion.

Friendships are forged, broken, and repaired during their exhausting quest. The pursuit is expensive, competitive, and often lonely, but that does not deter these birders. As one character explains, for many birding is not a hobby but a calling.



The photography of birds and terrain is lovely. The story has humor and some tender moments of family support and bonding. There is even a sweet little romance. Be sure to watch through the end credits to see images of the 745 birds counted during 1998's Big Year: beautiful.

This film shares with the viewer the beauty of birds and the unbridled enthusiasm of the diverse people who follow them. You might even recognize yourself!

Jules Guerin designed the pastel color scheme for the fair.



Lecture on the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 by Nancy DeStefanis

On December 10th, Nancy will present a lecture, slide-show, and *The Phantom City*, a ten-minute film shot at the fair.

Considered by many to be last great world's fair, the Panama-Pacific Exposition of 1915 was designed to showcase San Francisco's recovery from the 1906 earthquake and the construction of the Panama Canal. Built on 635 acres of landfill in what is now the Marina District, the fair demonstrated that San Francisco was a center of new ideas and manufacturing. [See details at right](#).

Also, please note the current related exhibit at SF's de Young Museum, *Jewel City: Art from San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition*, now through January 10, 2016.



The Palace of Fine Arts, designed by Bernard Maybeck, with Wind and Spray sculpture by Anna Coleman Ladd.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SF Nature Walks: From 10 am to noon; *rain cancels all walks*. Please bring binoculars if you can, and a pencil. For directions see our online [events calendar](#).

Birding for Everyone: First Saturdays from 10 am to noon in the SF Botanical Garden. Next: Nov. 7 and Dec. 5 with Megan Prelinger and Sarah Barsness. 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 SF residents with proof of residency; non-residents pay a fee.

Birding Crissy Field: Sat., Nov. 14, 10 am to noon, with Megan Prelinger. Meet outside Warming Hut cafe. Adults \$10, children free.

Birding Chain of Lakes: Sat., Dec. 12, 10 am to noon, with Alan Hopkins. Meet at Middle Lake parking lot. Adults \$10, children free.

Lecture/Slide show/Film on the Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915, by Nancy DeStefanis: Thursday, Dec. 10, 7 pm – 8:15 pm
Merced Branch, SF Public Library
155 Winston Dr, San Francisco

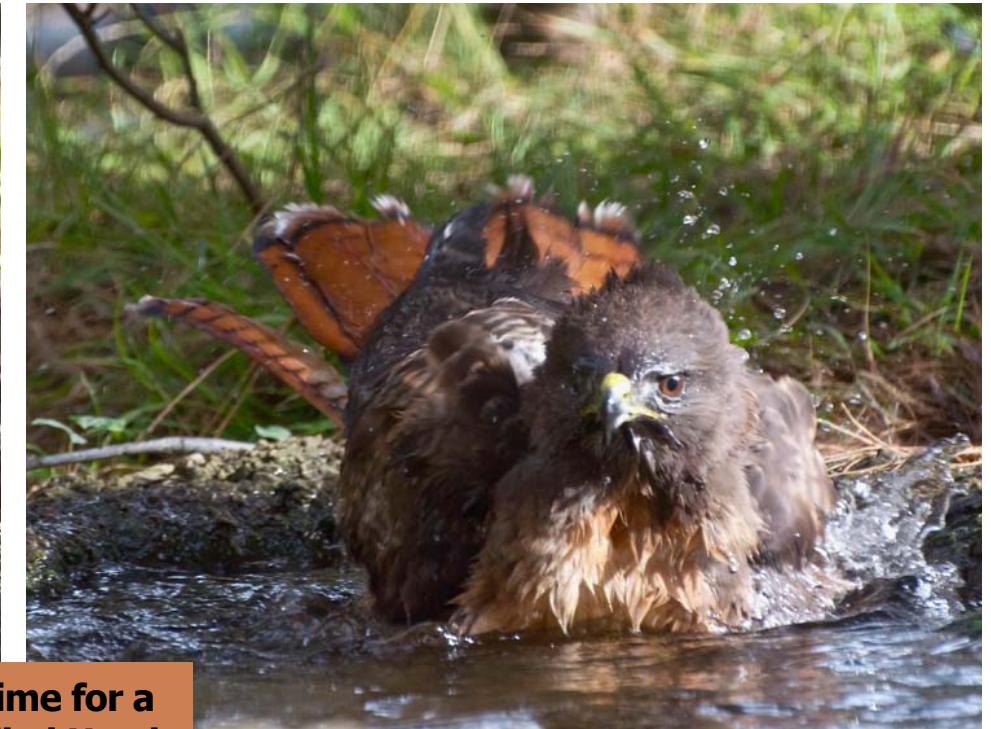
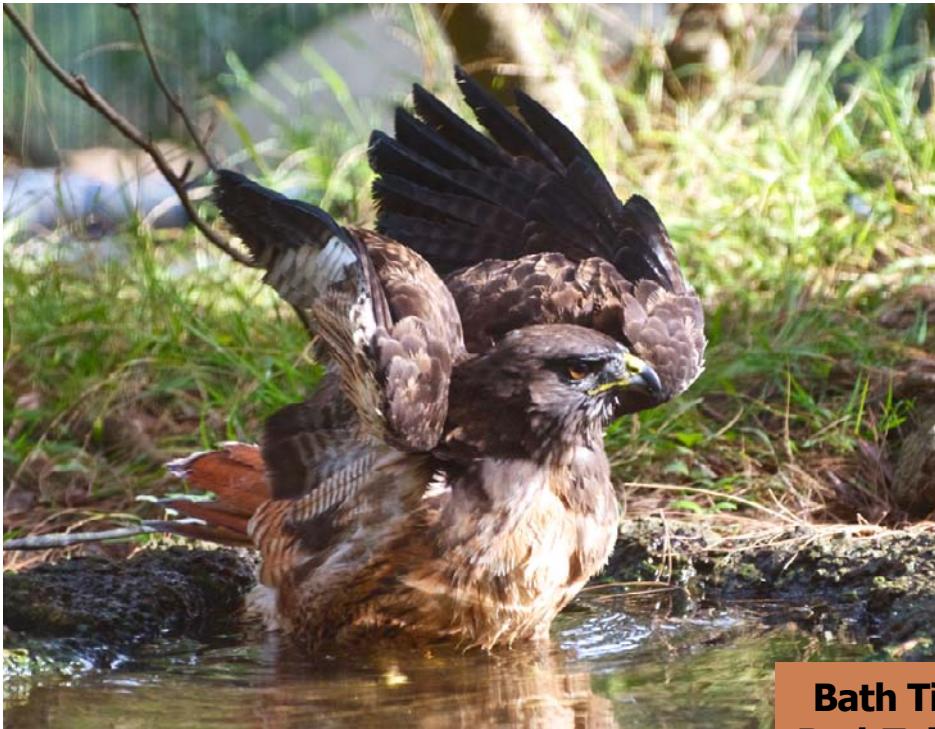
Free. Entrance on Stonecrest at Winston (across from Stonestown Galleria, near 19th Ave. & Winston)
Library phone: 415-355-2825

SF Nature Education membership: Adults, \$35;
Seniors 65+, \$30; students 21 or under, \$20.

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**Bath Time for a
Red-Tailed Hawk**
Photos by Sandi Wong

