



Executive Director's Corner

Dear Friends,

Thanks so much for helping us meet our goal of \$5,000 for the matching grant!

A busy spring at Stow Lake yielded five new heron chicks, bringing the total number of fledglings to 167 since we began counting in 1993.

Our Heron Cam was a big success—we were able to follow the three chicks on Heron Island as they grew up and learned to fly. We plan to activate it in January when the Great Blue Herons return.

Applications for our winter intern program are available online on our website, sfnature.org, under *Get Involved*. If you know a 7th or 8th grader, high-school, or college student, please share this great opportunity with them. The deadline to apply is Sept. 19th, and training begins in October.

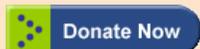
Our *Birding for Everyone* program continues at the SF Botanical Garden on the first Saturday of each month. Please join our naturalists Megan Prelinger and Sarah Barsness for an enjoyable and leisurely two-hour walk through the garden.

Our winter walks at Crissy Field and Heron's Head Park begin on Saturday, November 14. Stay tuned for further details.

I look forward to seeing you on the trails.

Best regards,

Nancy DeStefanis



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A Successful Late-Season Heron Nest at Stow Lake

Nancy DeStefanis, Executive Director

In late April of this year two pairs of Great Blue Herons vacated the nesting colony on Stow Lake's Heron Island and moved to an island near the waterfall. We followed the progress of the two new nests starting in mid-June. The pair in the lower nest continued to add sticks to the nest during June, but ultimately abandoned it.

The upper nest held three chicks on June 14th. A few days later only two were visible. We watched the two chicks grow up, and the older one flew from the nest on July 25th!

To take advantage of this unusual late nest, on Saturdays, July 11th, 18th, and 25th, we conducted special summer Heron Watch viewings. Hundreds of



Parent heron with three chicks on June 17th, in a late-season nest near the Stow Lake waterfall.

locals and tourists came by to look and learn. The second chick left the nest on August 5th.

People were surprised that they could see these pre-historic-looking birds right in the middle of the city. Volunteers Sarah Barsness, Mark Levin, Chris Malfatti, and Mike Smylie educated the public with the help of spotting scopes. Viewers were delighted and awe-struck.



Only two heron chicks remain in the nest on June 21st.

On the pages ahead:

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Photo: Nancy DeStefanis



Photo: Nancy DeStefanis



Photo: SFNE

Heron Watching Continued to Mid-summer at Stow Lake



Photo: SFNE



Photo: Grace Ruth

Top, left to right: the lower late-season nest on June 21st (later abandoned); two upper nest chicks on July 18th; Nancy urges hands-on inspection at show and tell.

Right: newly-fledged youngest heron chick fishes for a meal; above: volunteer Mark Levin provides information about the late-season nest.



Photos l to r: Mike Smylie; Grace Ruth

Heron Watching Continued to Mid-summer at Stow Lake

Clockwise from top left:
 Volunteer Sarah Barsness offers a child a closer look at a heron nest; newly-fledged heron mistakes a flower for a fish; Nancy informs a group; Mike Smylie helps visitors use the spotting scope; Mike (left) with Nancy and Italian visitors at Stow Lake.



Photo: Jairo Albert Lopez



Photo: Jairo Albert Lopez



Photo: Jairo Albert Lopez



Heron photos: Grace Ruth



Photo: Mike Smylie



Clockwise from above:
 Growing heron chicks get ready to fledge; volunteer Jim Leist and viewing group at the spring observation site; volunteer Jessica Leist with visitor at a spotting scope; interns Fiona, Ben, Zed, and Chiara sketch in field journals; volunteer Janel Schulenberg (in cap) with a heron watcher.



Three Heron Chicks Fledge Early! Nancy DeStefanis, Executive Director

The three chicks on Heron Island fledged at the end of May. Despite our weekly monitoring, we did not see activity in the nest to indicate that they had hatched at the end of February instead of early April.

It takes 12 weeks for Great Blue Heron chicks to fledge. As we monitored the chicks we noticed on May 20th that all the chicks had left.

We had a great spring season filled with volunteers and visitors. Every Saturday for six weeks hundreds of visitors came by to learn about the nesting herons.

We plan to start our Heron Cam feed in January, so stay tuned.



All other photos: SFNE

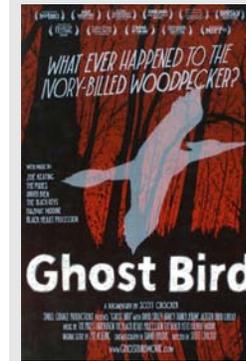
Spring Heron Watch Wraps Up with Visitors, Interns, and Volunteers on Hand



Clockwise from left: Volunteer Anne Gajjour; intern Ben, center; field trip leader Nancy DeStefanis with volunteers Ian Hull, Stephen Ferenz, and visitors; naturalist Sharon Pretti, center, in blue cap, with volunteers Jacob Zollinger, Andrew Sundling, and Isabelle Chow; and intern Michael with a visitor.



Film Review



Ghost Bird

2009; Written and directed by Scott Crocker. 85 min. Available on Netflix. ghostbirdmovie.com

Reviewed by Michele Hunnewell

The purported sighting of an extinct bird, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, in the small town of Brinkley, Arkansas, marked the beginning of a long and arduous quest by hundreds of bird-lovers to discover if the

bird still exists. This award-winning documentary is not only a chronicle of that quest but a reminder that extinct is forever.

In May 2005, an Ivory-billed Woodpecker, a species long thought to have been eliminated, was sighted in the Cache River Wildlife Refuge in Arkansas.

Legions of birdwatchers and curious tourists descended on the dying town of Brinkley, boosting the economy enormously.

Last seen in Arkansas in the mid-1940s, Ivory-billed Woodpeckers did not survive the destruction of their main habitat, the Singer Tract, in that state. A forest of hundreds of acres, the Singer Tract (owned by the sewing machine company) was logged bare and was eventually replaced by a soybean field. The birds died with the trees.

The video of the purported sighting was poor quality, and renowned ornithologists from Cornell and other universities denied that the bird seen was the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. They insisted and eventually proved that the bird in question was a Pileated Woodpecker.

Over 140 bird species are gone: Carolina Parakeets, once a common species: gone by 1914; Passenger Pigeons: reduced from billions to zero; Eskimo Curlews: finished off by recreational hunting. Humans bear responsibility for this devastating decimation.

The one upbeat note in *Ghost Bird* is that the failure to save the Ivory-billed Woodpecker in the 1940s led to the founding of The Nature Conservancy in 1951, and the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

Photos: SFNE

Birding for Everyone, August 1st Alan Hopkins, Naturalist



August is an interesting time for birding in San Francisco. While June and July are fairly static for land bird migration, in early August the first “fall” migratory land birds start to appear. By mid-September the parks will be flooded with southbound flycatchers, vireos, and warblers. Along the coast migrating shorebirds are already feeding along the tideline, and offshore Sooty Shearwaters can be seen by the thousands.

As we began the August 1st walk I wasn’t expecting to see much in the way of migrants. The weather was overcast, muggy, and still. Where there had been a chorus of birdsong two months before, now the Arboretum was pretty much silent. With breeding season over and most of the young off the nest there is no reason for birds to expend a lot of energy in song.

There were birds to see: **American Robins** and **Canada Geese** on the lawn and a **Black Phoebe** snagging insects from a cherry tree. **Anna’s Hummingbirds** chasing each other around a flowering eucalyptus. The male **Allen’s Hummers** seem to have already left. Our remaining locally breeding female and immature **Allen’s Hummingbirds Selasphorus sasin** will soon be joined by southbound **Rufous Hummingbirds Selasphorus rufus**. Unfortunately at this time year there is no way to tell them apart in the field.

With the warm weather and drought it is always good to check areas with water. We headed for the Fragrance Garden, where a trickle of water flows from the palms of the sculpture of Saint Francis. This secluded spot is a favorite for birds to drink and bathe. Most were **Song Sparrows**, but a bright yellow bird gave us a few quick glances: it was medium-sized and entirely yellow, with faint wing bars and a slightly curved bill. The bird was a female **Hooded Oriole**; female Bullock’s Orioles have pale bellies.

The Song Sparrows in the area were juveniles and molting adults. Even common birds can be a bit hard to identify as their feathers are replaced. Many juvenile birds just out of the nest have a plumage that does not entirely resemble the adults’. Juvenile **Dark-eyed Juncos** and **White-crowned Sparrows** have streaked breasts, unlike their parents. Song Sparrows also have streaked breasts, but unlike the adults the streaking is finer,

giving them the appearance of a Lincoln’s Sparrow. We noted a number of juvenile Robins with spotted breasts. Juvenile birds’ feathers have all grown in at the same time and tend to look a bit soft, but they are all in order without gaps.

Most of our juveniles will look like female adults by the end of fall. Some birds such as Bald Eagles can take five years to attain adult plumage; for albatross it can take twelve or more years. Adult birds must replace worn feathers. Feeding young and migrating are taxing on a birds’ reserves, and so birds don’t molt until the young are out of the nest.

Many of the sparrows we saw looked very tattered with missing feathers, like an old pair of blue jeans. While a bird may look ratty, molt happens in a precise way called the molt cycle. Different families and species have differing cycles. Understanding molt cycles can be challenging but helpful in identifying difficult species.

Continuing, we found ourselves in the Succulent Garden watching a number of **Pygmy Nuthatches** feeding on bright yellow flowers atop an agave stalk. Agave flowers are also used by hummingbirds, warblers, orioles, and sometimes bats. The dried stalk may become a nest site for next spring’s woodpeckers, nuthatches, and swallows.

As we were walking along the trail to the Muir Pond someone’s sharp eyes spotted an **American Goldfinch** in yellow flowers. The bright yellow male matched the flowers nicely. Unlike the greenish **Lesser Goldfinch**, which looks the same all year, American Goldfinches molt into a dull greyish/brown basic (winter) plumage. Shortly the female goldfinch flew up to share a seedpod with her mate.

On the return route we stopped by the salvias planted near the succulents and had fine looks at Selasphorus hummers working the flowerers. The Hand Tree had a cooperative **Downy Woodpecker** but we missed Pacific Wren in the Redwoods.



Indigo Bunting

Photo: Sarah Barsness

As we approached the California Garden the **Red-shouldered Hawk** we’d been hearing came into view. The question was, Is the bird an adult or juvie? The bird was backlit, making the contrast on the tail and wings hard to see. I quickly moved to get the hawk in better light.

I was just about to get onto the hawk when a voice behind me said, “Alan, we have a Bluebird.” A Bluebird?! I rushed back and found the bird in a hedge.

It was indeed a blue bird but not a Bluebird! We could see the bird was finch-sized and dark blue from head to tail. It was also wet and molting a few feathers, which made identification less than a slam-dunk.

There are only two finch-like all-blue birds in California: Blue Grosbeak, which nests in the Central Valley, and Indigo Bunting, which nests primarily in the eastern half of North America. The bunting is a rare bird in this state. We could see on our bird that—although it was wet and molting—it lacked brown wing-bars and black on the face. The beak was not a grosbeak’s but similar to a goldfinch bill, and the bird appeared rather small. This deep blue bird was an **Indigo Bunting**; a life bird for many on the walk and a great way to finish the trip.

SF Botanical Garden 08/01/2015

Compiled by: Alan Hopkins
Birds: 29 species

Canada Goose
Red-shouldered Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Western Gull
Caspian Tern
Rock Pigeon
Red-masked Parakeet
Anna’s Hummingbird
Selasphorus Hummingbird
Downy Woodpecker
Black Phoebe
Steller’s Jay
Western Scrub Jay

Common Raven
Tree Swallow
Chestnut-backed Chickadee
Bushtit
Pygmy Nuthatch
American Robin
European Starling
California Towhee
Song Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
Indigo Bunting
Hooded Oriole
Purple Finch
House Finch
Lesser Goldfinch
American Goldfinch



Clockwise from far left: Snowy Egrets with four chicks, Newark; Marbled Godwits at Redwood Shores; Great Horned Owllet in Golden Gate Park; three Great Horned Owl chicks with parent in Golden Gate Park; Black Skimmers at Redwood Shores; Burrowing Owls in Vacaville; Black-necked Stilt with chicks in Redwood City (center).

**Birding the Bay Area
with Photographer
Sandi Wong**



Birding for Everyone, June 27th

Megan Prelinger, Naturalist



The last Saturday in June was a hot one. This was our July walk, held early to avoid the public events scheduled in the garden for the 4th of July. Taking a clockwise route, we practiced birding by ear as we traversed the gently sloping paths leading downhill from the library courtyard.

We listened to the different voices reaching us through the trees: **American Robins**, **California Towhees**, **House** and **Purple Finches**.

Then we heard the familiar “rat-a-tat” call of the **Wilson’s Warbler**. Careful scanning revealed a bright male singing high above the path. We could hear more distant Wilson’s voices exchanging calls with this individual, who perched long enough for all of us to get a good look at him.



Band-tailed Pigeon

Photo: Doug Greenberg

In the California Garden a juvenile **Cooper’s Hawk** was perched in a tall tree, and an adult Cooper’s flew overhead. In the distant cypress stands we could hear and see our first **Red-tailed Hawk**. Three **Band-tailed Pigeons** flew by, followed by a looser cluster of **Rock Pigeons**.

At the reservoir was a **Black Phoebe**, and there were calls from **Pacific Wrens** in the Redwood Grove. In the bird-watcher’s amphitheater that is the Succulent Garden we stopped to take in the **Tree Swallows** and **Pygmy Nuthatches** in and around the century plants. Nearby a **Downy Woodpecker** foraged in a leafy tree. We had our first clear views of **House Finches**, and we took longer looks at **Anna’s** and **Allen’s Hummingbirds**.

The walk featured a number of species flying high: **California** and **Western Gulls**, **Red-masked Parakeets**, **Canada Geese**, a **Turkey Vulture**, **American Crows** and **Common Ravens**, and a lone **Caspian Tern**. In the Australia zone we saw a flock of **Lesser Goldfinches**, and at the Waterfowl Pond we were delighted to see a **Great Blue Heron** fly in, probably from the colony at Stow Lake.

SF Botanical Garden

06/27/2015

Compiled by:

Megan Prelinger

Birds: 33 species

Cooper’s Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Wilson’s Warbler
House finch
Purple Finch
American Robin
Brewer’s Blackbird
Allen’s Hummingbird
Anna’s Hummingbird
California Towhee
Band-tailed Pigeon
Rock Pigeon
California Gull
Western Gull

Black Phoebe

Pygmy Nuthatch

Scrub Jay

Tree Swallow

Bushtit

Dark-eyed Junco

Pacific Wren [by ear]

Downy Woodpecker

Common Raven

American Crow

Turkey Vulture

Chestnut-backed Chickadee

Canada Goose

White-crowned Sparrow

Song Sparrow

Lesser Goldfinch

Great Blue Heron

Caspian Tern

Red-masked Parakeet.

Coexisting with Coyotes in the City

Janet Kessler

Coyotes will soon be taking their youngsters on wider treks away from their dens, usually when it’s dark, and humans aren’t around. But it is not unusual to see coyotes during the day; they are not nocturnal. There is more potential for dog/coyote encounters and confrontations during pupping season. We can be prepared for these encounters by understanding behavior and following simple guidelines.



Photo: Matt Knoth

Coyote near the Legion of Honor in San Francisco

San Francisco has several dozen coyotes in parks, most of them in nuclear families. Because many people have dogs, and because it is pupping season, it is a good time to brush up on coyote behavior and the guidelines for

UPCOMING EVENTS

SF Nature Walks: From 10 am to noon. 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: Sep. 5 and Oct. 3, 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 all SF residents with proof of residency; non-residents pay a fee.

Winter Student Internship Applications Now Online

Apply for a winter internship and learn about local wetland and shore birds at Crissy Field and Heron’s Head Park. Deadline to apply: Sept. 19. Training begins in October. Interns will learn to use sighting equipment and talk to the public. Community service hours given. Visit http://sfnature.org/get_involved/intern.html. \$100 internship fee; scholarships available.

peacefully coexisting. This involves keeping your pets away from coyotes and knowing what to do if one comes too close.

Coyotes As Neighbors, at <https://youtu.be/euG7R11aXq0>, is an excellent half-hour YouTube presentation that explains coyote behavior, including their families and territoriality towards other canines, and guidelines for keeping us all safe. It shows how to effectively shoo off a coyote that has come too close. (Spanish version can be found here: <http://youtu.be/FJVGKwLiYG4>. Mandarin version can be found here: <http://youtu.be/aFWyegSrNHw>.)

For a short summary on coyote behavior, visit my recent article in *Bay Nature*: <https://baynature.org/articles/how-to-get-along-with-coyotes-as-pups-venture-out/>.

Please help by sharing this information with others. Together we can make San Francisco one of the most coyote-savvy urban areas in the US.

For more information see Janet’s website, coyoteyipps.com

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



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Two Red-tailed Hawks Grow Up in Golden Gate Park

Photos by Sandi Wong

