



The Blue Heron

News from San Francisco Nature Education • March 2019



Executive Director's Corner

There are now at least four active Great Blue Heron nests on the island at Stow Lake. March is a quiet month because the nesting herons—both male and female—will be incubating eggs for about 30 days. Great Blues usually lay between three and five pale blue eggs. They will hatch in April. Heron Watch begins on April 13th and runs through June 15th.

We have added a new free program during March—a Great Horned Owl observation site across from the Bison Paddock in Golden Gate Park. The owls have been nesting in the same tree for many years, and have produced three or four owlets each year. Volunteers with spotting scopes will be stationed near that tree. See page 5 for details.

We have received a \$10,000 matching grant to support Heron Watch (ten Saturdays), Great Horned Owl observation (two Saturdays) and our internship programs. The grant will match all donations received between March 1 and April 30.

Three elementary school and two high school students are interns this year. Each intern will contribute at least 30 hours to our programs.

Please give generously and donate online or by mail. Thanks so much for your support. I look forward to seeing you soon.

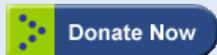
Best,

Nancy DeStefanis

Membership: Adults, \$35; Seniors 65+, \$30; Joint Membership for two seniors at same residence \$50; students 21 or under, \$20.

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David Sullivan



Grace Ruth

Nesting Great Blue Herons at Stow Lake engage in courtship behavior.

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- 6 Winter Birds at South Lake in Golden Gate Park



Crissy Field, February 9th Joachim Gonzalez, Intern

Hello Readers,

This walk was a shortie but goodie. It was led by Nicolas Forestell and me. We were joined by a good number of people, which was surprising

considering the weather forecast. Clear skies welcomed us, and showed no sign of what was to come.

We started at the Warming Hut, and scoping from the pier we saw good numbers of **Common Loons**, **Western Grebes**, and **Pelagic Cormorants**. There was also a Pacific Loon. The highlight of the day was a **Marbled Murrelet**, which unfortunately showed itself only for a few seconds before it dived and wasn't seen again. That is actually an uncommon sight in the city.

After a short walk we found the two phoebes we expected—first a **Say's Phoebe**, which we saw for a

little bit before it flew off. The more common **Black Phoebe** hung out longer on a pile of sticks.

When we got to the private pier we were able to scope the abandoned pier and locate four **Willetts** roosting with **Western Gulls**, which had been common throughout the walk. The Willetts were a surprise to find there. A female **Belted Kingfisher** showed off her namesake rufous belt.

As we got to the Crissy Field Lagoon it started to pour. Soon we were drenched. Before we turned back, we found a few **Yellow-rumped Warblers** and a flock of **Least Sandpipers** that had flown onto a log.

The walk back was wet and unproductive as we rushed to get to the safety of the Warming Hut. It was still a good walk, with great participants, and highlighted by good sightings.



Grace Ruth



Bill Hunnewell



SFNE

Clockwise from top left: Common Loon, Long-billed Curlew, Willet, Crissy Field walkers, led by interns Joachim Gonzalez and Nicolas Forestell, center foreground.



Bill Hunnewell



Birding for Everyone, February 2nd

Megan Prelinger, Naturalist

Our group lucked out with a break between storms. At the outset, a small flock of **Cedar Waxwings** flew in to the crown of an evergreen on the main lawn of the SF

Botanical Garden, with **American Robins** also in the vicinity. These two species are commonly found together even though they compete for food resources, as both follow the availability of ripe berries and other fruits on trees and shrubs.

With the appearance of a pair of **Red-tailed Hawks** engaged in a courtship flight (circling one another, with talons extended), we appreciated the seasonal change that mid-winter brings in the mild Bay Area climate, with many spring-like seasonal behaviors, movements, and songs beginning to appear. We were delighted to find a first-of-season **Allen's Hummingbird** browsing an aloe plant.



Clockwise from above: Golden-crowned Sparrows, Hooded Merganser, Song Sparrow, Fox Sparrow. Photos by Grace Ruth.



SF Botanical Garden February 2, 2019 Compiled by Megan Prelinger

33 species:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Mallard - 2 | American Crow - 7 |
| Hooded Merganser - 2 | Common Raven - 2 |
| Anna's Hummingbird - 12 | Chestnut-backed Chickadee - 2 |
| Allen's Hummingbird - 1 | Pygmy Nuthatch - 4 |
| Western Gull - 10 | Pacific Wren - 1 |
| Larus sp. - 5 (unidentified Larus gulls) | Ruby-crowned Kinglet - 5 |
| Gull sp. - 12 (unidentified gulls) | Hermit Thrush - 3 |
| Double-crested Cormorant - 1 | American Robin - 18 |
| Great Blue Heron - 1 | Cedar Waxwing - 6 |
| Red-tailed Hawk - 2 | House Finch - 2 |
| Downy Woodpecker - 1 | Fox Sparrow - 3 |
| Nuttall's Woodpecker - 1 | Dark-eyed Junco - 4 |
| Northern Flicker - 2 | White-crowned Sparrow - 9 |
| Black Phoebe - 6 | Golden-crowned Sparrow - 5 |
| Steller's Jay - 2 | Song Sparrow - 12 |
| California Scrub-Jay - 3 | California Towhee - 2 |
| | Orange-crowned Warbler - 1 |
| | Yellow-rumped Warbler - 40 |
| | Townsend's Warbler - 2 |



Around the Bay
Photos by Rozanne E. Junker



Clockwise from top left: Willet, Brown Pelican, Red-breasted Merganser, Snowy Plover, dancing Great Blue Heron.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SF Nature Walks: Members free, non-members \$10, children always free. Please bring binoculars if you can, and a pencil. Rain cancels all walks. For directions see our [events calendar](#).

Birding for Everyone: First Saturdays, 10 am to noon in the SF Botanical Garden. Next walks: Mar. 2 and Apr. 6, with Megan Prelinger or Sarah Barsness. Meet at SF Botanical Garden bookstore, 9th Ave. near Lincoln. **SF Botanical Garden:** Free to SF residents; non-residents pay a fee.

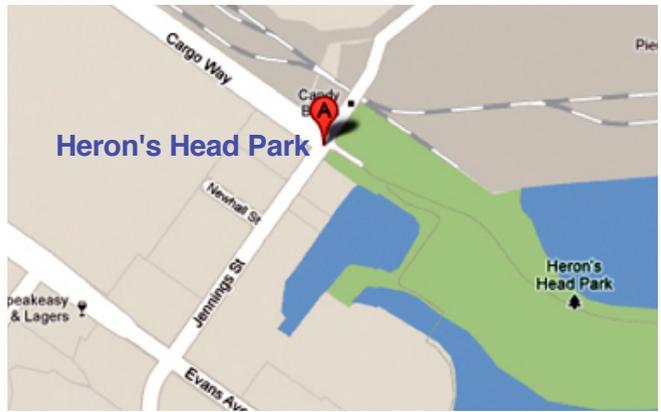
Heron's Head Park: Saturday, Mar. 9, with Megan Prelinger, from 10 to noon, approx. Meet at trailhead near parking lot, Cargo Way & Jennings St.

Free Lecture & Slideshow: Wednesday, Apr. 10, at 7 pm. Nancy DeStefanis will discuss the history of **Golden Gate Park** and the herons, hawks, and owls that nest there. SF Public Library, Merced Branch, 155 Winston Drive.

Great Horned Owl Observation: Learn about these fascinating owls and their owlets from volunteers with spotting scopes. Saturdays, March 16 & 30, 10–noon. Free. Meet on Kennedy Drive across the street from the sign for the Buffalo Paddock in Golden Gate Park.

Heron Watch: At Stow Lake for ten Saturdays, beginning Apr. 13, from 10 am–1 pm. [Heron Watch 2019 Flyer](#). Save the dates!

Adult volunteers needed for Heron Watch 2019: http://sfnature.org/get_involved/volunteer.html. Deadline to apply: March 15.



Sandi Wong

Great Horned Owl.

Heron Romance Rosemary Mosco

They lived at opposite ends of the pond. From afar, she admired his long plumes and excellent fishing technique.



One day he came flying toward her. Watching him approach, she wondered: What did he want? And was he... carrying something in his beak?



Her heart skipped a beat as he landed beside her. Fluffing his neck feathers, he said those three special words:



"Here's a stick."



San Francisco Nature Education

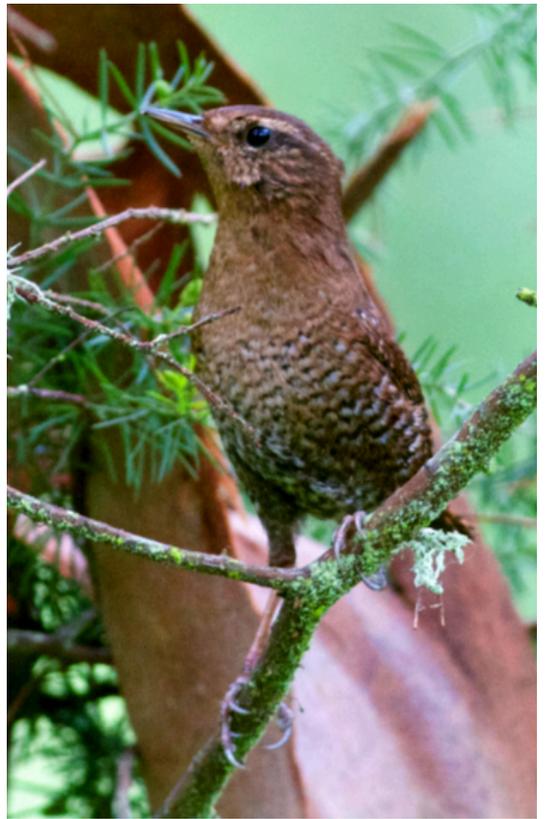


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San Francisco Nature Education is in its 19th year of delivering comprehensive environmental education programs to students from schools in the San Francisco Unified School District.



Winter Birds at South Lake in Golden Gate Park
Photos by Sandi Wong



Clockwise from top left:
Belted Kingfisher, Winter
Wren, Brown Creeper,
Northern Flicker, Yellow-
rumped Warbler.