



Executive Director's Corner



Dear Friends,

We wish you and your families and friends good health and all the best during these very challenging times.

San Francisco Nature Education, like other birding organizations, has cancelled all public programs and field trips during April. We hope you stay safe and enjoy the nesting Great Blue Herons, Red-tailed Hawks, and Great Horned Owls through photos in our expanded newsletter.

If you venture out, please do not share binoculars, spotting scopes, cameras, or tripods.

Now, some good news! The Great Blue Herons are sitting on eggs in six nests at Stow Lake. We expect chicks in a week or two. Meanwhile, the Red-tailed Hawks in the adjacent tree are also nesting. We expect hawklets about the same time as the herons. The Great Horned Owls in the west end of GG Park have already produced owlets. We will be covering all these activities in upcoming issues.

We have many activities about herons for children at home. Please see link on p. 2.

We began our 20th Anniversary Campaign in March, but current events have limited our fundraising efforts. We hope you will make a donation and support us while our programs are inactive.

In the meantime, please stay safe and practice social distancing. We will update the status of future programs via email and on our website in mid-April.

Best regards,

Nancy H. DeStefanis



Natti Kongkaew



Marty Ernstler

From top: Mating—in some parlance "doing the deed;" Above: Adding sticks to the nest.

Please donate online—Network for Good portal is secure—
or mail a check payable to SFNE: PO Box 210303, SF CA 94121

Our tax ID no. is 54-2111941.

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

e-mail: info@sfnature.org
telephone: 415-205-0776
www.sfnature.org



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What's Happening at Stow Lake Nancy DeStefanis



Grace Ruth

In the Great Blue Heron tree on a tiny island there are now six nests with eggs. Both parents take turns sitting on the eggs and turning the eggs every two hours so they incubate evenly.

We know they are sitting because we can see the herons hunkered down through our spotting scopes, standing up to turn the eggs, and the partners trading places. The eggs (pale blue and slightly larger than chicken eggs) will hatch in about thirty days.

Activities for Budding Ornithologists at Home

We have online heron activities that we will be expanding. Please click on the link:

http://sfnature.org/programs/about_heron.html



Grace Ruth



Robert Ho



Robert Ho

New Arrivals at the Heron Colony

Nancy DeStefanis

Late arrivals at the colony (as seen here) engage in lots of courtship activities to build the pair bond:

Stretch displays (or greetings) which both herons perform

Twig presentations: male brings the sticks, female constructs the nest. If it's an old nest, he still brings sticks to build the pair bond

Mutual preening (both herons comb the other's feathers)

Mating often (usually after the male delivers several sticks)

He's on top and delivers the cloacal kiss

After the eggs hatch:

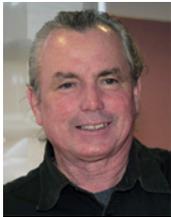
Parents take turns brooding the young and bringing in fish, gophers, and small birds, which they regurgitate into the nest.

When a parent is relieved by the other parent, the former flies out to forage and feed. They do *not* feed each other—only the chicks.



This Great Blue Heron nest is on the south side of the heron tree as seen from the Stow Lake Waterfall area. The pair is engaged in mating rituals, including stick presentation and nest-building. Photos: Grace Ruth.

Birding for Everyone, March 7th Alan Hopkins, Naturalist



March 7th began with a drizzle in the SF Botanical Garden. But the inclement weather didn't deter our hardy crew.

At the Southeast Asian Cloud Forest the cackling **American Robins** alerted us to a fine mixed feeding flock while the sun was trying to break through. We found **Hermit Thrushes**, **Townsend's Warblers**, and many **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**. We caught glimpses of the **Varied Thrush** that had been reported from the day before. The highlight of the trip was a **Nashville Warbler**, which actively gleaned in a tangle of vines and white flowers.

At the Succulent Garden, **Pygmy Nuthatches** were on the agave stalks. There was a pair of **Northern Flickers** in the alder tree above the John Muir Nature Trail Pond. On our return

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San Francisco Botanical Garden
March 7, 2020
Compiled by Alan Hopkins
31 Species:

Mallard
 Red-shouldered Hawk
 Western Gull
 California Gull
 Rock Pigeon
 Anna's Hummingbird
 Allen's Hummingbird
 Nuttall's Woodpecker
 Northern Flicker
 Black Phoebe
 Steller's Jay
 Western Scrub-Jay
 American Crow
 Common Raven

Chestnut-backed Chickadee
 Bushtit
 Pygmy Nuthatch
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet
 Hermit Thrush
 American Robin
 Varied Thrush
 Nashville Warbler
 Orange-crowned Warbler
 Yellow-rumped Warbler
 Townsend's Warbler
 Fox Sparrow
 California Towhee
 Song Sparrow
 White-crowned Sparrow
 Golden-crowned Sparrow
 Dark-eyed Junco



Bill Hunnewell



Bill Hunnewell



Judy Harter



Bill Hunnewell

Top row: Townsend's Warbler, Northern Flicker.
 Left: Varied Thrush; Above: Pygmy Nuthatch.

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walk there were **Fox Sparrows** doing their scratching thing, and the **Nuttall's Woodpecker** we'd been hearing came into view.

An **Orange-crowned Warbler** of the subspecies *orestera* made a very brief appearance nectaring on aloe flowers. The *orestera* subspecies has a gray head and should not be confused with Nashville or MacGillivray's Warblers. It is a bird of the Rocky

Mountains and Great Basin, and is uncommon here. The rain began again, so we made our way to the gate, thankful for a fine morning between showers.



Jarnie Chavez



Doug Greenberg

Above, from left: Orange-crowned Warbler, subspecies *orestera*; Nashville Warbler.

San Francisco Nature Education



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All contributions are tax-deductible. Our tax ID no. is 54-2111941.

San Francisco Nature Education is in its 20th year of delivering comprehensive environmental education programs to students from schools in the San Francisco Unified School District.

The Kahle/Austin Foundation has generously underwritten the Youth Internship Program in honor of their son Logan Kahle. Logan participated in the program for four years, and graduated from Cornell University in 2019 with a B.S. in information sciences and a minor in biology. We congratulate Logan and wish him well in all his future endeavors.

UPCOMING EVENTS: Updates

Birding for Everyone: No walk on Apr. 4. Later dates to be determined. Note: the SF Botanical Garden is currently closed to the public.

Community Day in Golden Gate Park on April 4th: All Golden Gate Park 150th Anniversary events have been postponed by the SF Recreation and Park Dept.

Free Lecture: A Merced Library lecture by Nancy DeStefanis scheduled for April 8th has been postponed.

Heron Watch: All April Heron Watch observation dates at Stow Lake have been cancelled. A decision will be made in mid-April about future dates.

Get the latest public health guidance online:
[SF Department of Public Health Coronavirus Facts](#)

**Mating Cooper's Hawks and
a Nesting Great Horned Owl**
Sandi Wong



Above: Copulating Cooper's Hawks; Great Horned Owl, right.



**An Allen's Hummingbird
Nest in Golden Gate Park
Sandi Wong**

