



## Executive Director's Corner



Dear Friends,

**Our 25th Anniversary Celebration is coming up on Tuesday evening May 20th at 5:30 pm at the Internet Archive. Please save the date-tickets go on sale next week on our website.**

I am pleased to report that we now have 5 Great Blue Heron nests in the giant Pine tree on the island opposite the Blue Heron Lake Boathouse. I believe one nest already has chicks because I heard the tiny sound of newly hatched chicks on March 29th! There is also a sixth nest around the corner on the healthy tree facing the waterfall.

**Please join us for Heron Watch -our free observation program starting on April 12th! Just show up – no registration necessary!!! We will have field trips for Families with children ages 5-12 and Beginning Birding Field Trips for Teenagers and Adults on each of the six Saturdays of Heron Watch. Please visit our home page [www.sfnature.org](http://www.sfnature.org) for more information and link for signing up for field trips.**

Our new interns, Avery and Colette, have completed their training at the Lake and commence assisting on field trips, sketching herons in action, and working on their projects starting April 12th. They graduate on May 17th. We are so happy to have them in our Youth Internship program-class of 2025.

**Many thanks for your support. We look forward to seeing you at Heron Watch in April and May and of course at our 25th Anniversary Celebration at the Internet Archive on May 20, 2025!**

Best regards,  
Nancy H. DeStefanis



Crissy Field birding group meets at East Beach on March 5th - courtesy SFNE

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### Heron Watch starts April 12th



Internet Archive - SFNE 25th Anniversary Celebration



Courtship in new nest near the boathouse courtesy Ian Reid



Adult heron on nest on island near Waterfall Courtesy Ken Stamper

## Interns Start Their Training!

By Jeanne Crawford, SFNE Trainer of Interns

Avery and Colette joined the program this year to study the lifecycle of the Great Blue Herons and learn all about local birds. On March 15th, they joined volunteer Steve Worsfold and Exec. Director Nancy DeStefanis (Ms. D) to learn how to use spotting scopes and observe the nests. Steve led a nature walk around Blue Heron Lake with the new interns.

On March 29, after Ms. D showed them the actual skulls of the Great Blue Heron and Brown Pelican and a hummingbird nest, I led them on a walk from the Boathouse to the top of Strawberry Hill. On the way to the Roman Bridge, Colette spotted a Black-crowned Night Heron crouched in the low branches just above the water. What a good spotter she is! Just after crossing the bridge, Avery noticed a hawk flying high above. The sun was shining and lit up its red tail so we knew it was a Red-tailed Hawk. Later, we heard the eerie cry of the Red-tailed Hawk – just a single long screaming call – a good sound for horror movies!



Jeanne Crawford, SFNE Educator (center) with interns Avery (left) and Colette (right)

In the water, besides seeing Mallards and Western Gulls, Avery noticed this bird sitting by the water with its wings hanging out reminding her of a bat. It was a Double-crested Cormorant drying its wings. We discussed the reason why. Cormorants do not have waterproof feathers like ducks, who keep their feathers regularly oiled for waterproofing. Cormorants are deep divers using their wings to go deep. This means when they come out of the water, they need to let their wings dry, otherwise they would have a hard time flying.

As we left the Pagoda on Strawberry Island, we saw a Black Phoebe nest, and there was a Black Phoebe sitting on it!



When we were crossing the bridge over the upper part of the waterfall, we paused to watch an Anna's Hummingbird feeding at the red blossoms above the water. Then we saw an Allen's Hummingbird land on a rock right in the waterfall with the water streaming over the rock. It was quite amazing!

At the top of Strawberry Hill, we talked about Sweeney's Observatory that was built there in 1891 when most of the surrounding trees were much smaller or not even planted yet. The observatory did not have a telescope, instead it was for visitors to admire the amazing views. It was so popular they added a second story and it looked like the Roman Coliseum! The 1906 Earthquake destroyed the Observatory. We found some remaining ruins and ate our lunch there.

On our way down a small bird was spotted busily hopping around in a small tree, never holding still and flicking its tail a lot – seeming to be very nervous. It was a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. On our final descent from Strawberry Hill on the way back, we saw a Great Blue Heron probably flying to one of the nests.

It was a wonderful walk with these two very sharp-eyed, enthusiastic and knowledgeable interns who were not only interested in the birds we saw, but also the plants, which I loved because I also am a plant lover.



Top left: Interns Colette and Avery holding their new mascot! Bottom left: Colette at Scope, Avery at Scope

### Species List Total: 16

- |                             |                                   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Black-crowned Night Heron   | Anna's Hummingbird                |
| American Coot               | Allen's Hummingbird               |
| Mallard duck                | Red-tailed hawk                   |
| Greater White-fronted goose | Steller's Jay                     |
| Double-crested Cormorant    | Common Raven                      |
| Tree Swallow                | Ruby-crowned Kinglet              |
| Western Gull                | Great Blue Heron                  |
| Black Phoebe (on nest)      | Song Sparrow (heard but not seen) |

All photos courtesy SFNE  
 Top left: Interns Colette and Avery holding their new mascot!  
 Bottom left: Colette at Scope, Avery at Scope

## Crissy Field trip report - Joe Spillane

Our group of families and beginning adults met near the windsock at Crissy Field East Beach. We were lucky with clear skies, little wind, and pleasant temperature. We made a brief walk to the marsh, where we observed a **Long-billed Curlew** and several **Killdeer** along the shoreline. In the water, we spotted several **American Coots**, an **Eared Grebe**, and a **Pied-billed Grebe**. As we walked farther along, we saw **Anna's Hummingbird** opposite the marsh, silhouetted against the Golden Gate Bridge. We also saw a **Double-crested Cormorant** flying and landing in the water.

The children were enthusiastic about identifying these birds and seeing them up close with their binoculars and the scopes. We spotted a couple **Red-breasted Mergansers** in the marsh and standing on a sandbar, as well as a **Bufflehead** diving. Farther along, we spotted a **Great Blue Heron** and a **Snowy Egret** and got a good view through the scopes that Nancy and Jonathan set up. As we made our way to the final bench on the outing, we were treated to a fly-over by two **Great Blue Herons**, one of which had a freshly caught gopher in its beak! Overall, it was a memorable opportunity to see some of the many bird species found in the area.



Group watches birds in marsh



Young girl watches the activity in the marsh!



Young boy scans the marsh



Long-billed Curlew catches breakfast!



Common Mergansers in flight



Ring-billed gull flying over the marsh  
 All photos pages 3 & 4  
 © 2025 Grant Ly

### Species List Total: 16

- |                          |                        |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| American Coot            | Killdeer               |
| Anna's Hummingbird       | Long-billed Curlew     |
| Bufflehead               | Pied-billed Grebe      |
| California Gull          | Red-breasted Merganser |
| Common Merganser         | Merganser              |
| Double-crested Cormorant | Snowy Egret            |
| Eared Grebe              | White-crowned Sparrow  |
| European Starling        | Whimbrel               |
| Great Blue Heron         |                        |

## Crissy Field trip photos - Grant Ly



Leader Joe Spillane shows birds in scope



Song sparrow perched on shrub



Anna's Hummingbird perched on a shrub



Checking off birds in their nature journals



Red-breasted Merganser catching sculpin!

# HERON WATCH

**FREE** Sats. April 12 through May 17  
 See the Great Blue Herons and their chicks at Heron Watch from 10-1pm at the Blue Heron Lake Boathouse! ([www.sfnature.org](http://www.sfnature.org))

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