



## Executive Director's Corner

## In This Issue...



Dear San Francisco Nature Education Community, **2024 was a banner year for San Francisco Nature Education! Please support our end of year Fundraising Campaign and help us reach our goal of \$50,000 to continue and expand these unique and outstanding programs:**

**Birding for Families with children ages 4-12** - started in summer 2023, is now year-round! So far 100 families have come out to observe and learn about local birds at Blue Heron Lake, SF Botanical Garden, Herons Head Park, Crissy Field and Chain of Lakes! We provide the SFNE nature journals for the children and loan binoculars to all.

**Heron Watch** - started in 2002-is a free program. For six Saturdays, volunteers operate high powered spotting scopes to show the dinosaur-like chicks in their nests and answer questions about the Great Blue Heron's lifecycle and behavior.

**Heron Watch Field Trips** -This year we added six field trips around Blue Heron Lake during the Heron Watch Observation program.

**Youth Internship Program**- 280 middle school, high school and college students have graduated. The program includes 8 Saturdays of training and teaching the public during March, April and May. We publish the SFNE newsletter 10 times per year and offer lectures on Great Blue Herons and local history- 4 x per year at local libraries and museums.

Last Fall, SFNE nominated Blue Heron Lake as the new name for the lake where the Great Blue Herons have nested since 1993. The Recreation and Parks Commission agreed and renamed the lake on January 18, 2024, as BLUE HERON LAKE.

We're celebrating our 25 years with a new book, **Great Blue Herons of Golden Gate Park**, a collection of photographs by the remarkable Ian Reid. Book sales benefit SFNE. We will send a copy of our new book as a special thank you for every donation of \$1,000 or more. Individual copies available in 2025.

**Please support our end of year campaign. Donations may be made through our secure online portal at [www.sfnature.org](http://www.sfnature.org) or by mail:**

**SFNE, PO Box 210303, San Francisco, CA 94121. All donations are tax-deductible; our tax id number is 54-2111941.**

We send Season's Greetings to you and your families. Thanks for your continuing support.

In partnership,

*Nancy*

Nancy DeStefanis, Executive Director

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The Great Blue Herons of Golden Gate Park



Families walk through the Garden



Children work on their nature journals

**Next: Field Trip Fun!**

## SF Botanical Garden -Birding for Families- Nov. 9, 2024

### Trip report by Alan Hopkins

It was a beautiful fall day for our November bird walk in the Botanical Gardens. We passed out binoculars for those folks who needed them and then we split the participants into two manageable sized groups. Our group headed along the garden's southern paths. Maybe it was the warm weather but there was not much bird activity at first. We did see two high flying **Red-tailed Hawks**.

In the Asia Garden the kids had a good time following the path through Bamboo Forest. Bamboo in a non-native grass and doesn't really attract many birds, but it is fun to imagine that you are in an Asian Forest somewhere.

In the California Natives Garden a **Steller's Jay** called as it flew overhead showing us its dark blue belly and dark dusky head. Near the reservoir a **Townsend's Warbler** showed briefly in a nearby bush while **Yellow-rumped Warblers** hawked flying insects over the water. A curious **California Scrub Jay** came in to check us out. The bird gave a good close look and it was easy to see the Jay's pale gray throat and belly and brownish back, much different than the Steller's deep blues and blacks.



Alan Hopkins (center) with Group 2

We worked our way past the Redwoods and checked briefly around a gardener's shed for the Saw-wet Owl the gardener had seen earlier in the week. We didn't see the small owl but it is a bird well worth looking for.

We stopped briefly on the stones at the Succulent Garden. We watched the agave stalk with nest holes but it was the fall after all and nothing showed. There were also few flowers for hummingbirds to feed from.

We did hear and saw briefly one of the local **Red-shouldered Hawks**. Time for the walk was running out so we worked on our nature journals at the top of the hill.



California Scrub Jay

When it was time to start back, we walked a short distance along the edge of the Old World Cloud Forest and some of us heard soft "who, who, whosa." It sure sounded like an owl! We were a short distance from where the Saw-wet was seen. However a Saw-wet Owl's calls are whistled "Toot... toot... toot" not what we were hearing. We located the bush that the call seemed to be coming from, but the calls stopped as soon as we got close.



Hiking through the Bamboo Forest

The thick foliage prevented us from seeing into the bush but what we could see was the bush was full of birds! There was a large flock of **Bushtits**, **Townsend's Warblers** and **Anna's Hummingbirds**. Most of the birds moved off so we moved along to for our last stop at the duck pond. A **Belted Kingfisher** made a brief appearance and a single **Western Gull** and **American Coots** and a **Mallard** finished off the day's list. Another fun day for all.



From left to right Grant Ly, photographer, Alan Hopkins, trip lead, Kevin Biggerstaff, volunteer & Nancy DeStefanis, director

### 24 Species Spotted:

- |                        |                           |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Canada Goose           | Steller's Jay             |
| Mallard                | California Scrub-Jay      |
| Great Blue Heron       | Common Raven              |
| Red-Shouldered Hawk    | American Crow             |
| Red-Tailed Hawk        | Western Gull              |
| Anna's Hummingbird     | Chestnut-backed Chickadee |
| American Coots         | Pygmy Nuthatch            |
| Golden-crowned Sparrow | American Robin            |
| Belted Kingfisher      | Yellow-rumped Warbler     |
| Black Phoebe           | Townsend's Warbler        |
| Bushtit                | California Towhee         |
|                        | Song Sparrow              |

## SF Botanical Garden -Birding for Families- Nov. 9, 2024

### Trip report by Beth Brumell

It was a beautiful fall day at the San Francisco Botanical Garden, perfect for introducing a new group to the joys of birding. My co-leaders Bonnie, Omeed and Chris joined me in welcoming six adults and five enthusiastic children, all ready to explore with binoculars and bird guides in hand.

As we began our walk, a lively group of Canada Geese greeted us with their loud honking, setting an exciting tone for the day. We strolled through the gardens, spotting an array of beautiful birds, including a Ruby-crowned Kinglet and a Red-breasted Sapsucker, which delighted everyone.



Group 2 Volunteers - Chris, Bonnie, Beth & Omeed

### 13 Species by Bonnie:

- |                        |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Canada Goose           | Ruby-crowned Kinglet |
| Red-tailed Hawk        | Western Gull         |
| American Crow          | Mallard              |
| Red-breasted Sapsucker | Muscovy Duck         |
| Townsend's Warbler     | House Finch          |
| Anna's Hummingbird     | Dark-eyed Junco      |
| Brown Creeper          |                      |



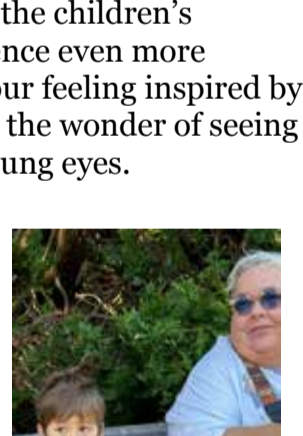
Group 2 led by Beth & Bonnie

During our break, the children eagerly opened their nature journals, sketching their favorite birds and sharing stories of their sightings. Their creativity was evident, and we were all impressed by their artistic talent and enthusiasm.

The day was filled with discovery, learning and connection with nature, and the children's excitement made the experience even more rewarding. We ended the tour feeling inspired by the beauty of the garden and the wonder of seeing these birds through fresh, young eyes.



Coloring the birds in their nature journals



Using the nature journal to check off birds

## Photo essay of the SF Botanical Garden Field Trip

Grant Ly



Anna's Hummingbird



California Scrub Jay



Dark-eyed Junco

## Birding for Families and Children

Our friendly and experienced volunteers lead birding walks for children ages 4 - 12 with their parents and/or guardians.

### Saturdays 10am - Noon

Field journals provided and binoculars loaned to all participants. Don't forget your pencils, water and snacks!

**Advance registration required.**  
Book your spot at [sfnature.org](http://sfnature.org) by Thursday prior to trip.  
Adults - \$15  
Children - \$5  
Trips begin promptly at 10am.  
Latecomers cannot be accommodated.  
All children must be accompanied by their own parent/guardian.  
We cannot take children who are not accompanied by their own parent or guardian.

**Upcoming field trips**

**Jan. 11** Herons Head Park meet at trailhead free parking

**Feb. 8** Blue Heron Lake meet at boathouse candy stand

**Mar. 8** Crissy Field meet at Warming Hut

**Mark your calendar!**



Ruby Crowned Kinglet



Muscovy Duck (domestic)

**San Francisco Nature Education**

Leading nature walks for children and adults in San Francisco since 2000.

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San Francisco Nature Education is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Please support our environmental education programs!