



San Francisco
Nature Education



www.sfnature.org

Happy New Year from SF Nature Education!

**Welcome to the January 2007 Edition of
San Francisco Nature Education's eNewsletter**

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1 – Fall School Programs

The abundant sunshine in San Francisco this fall provided spectacular birding weather for our 3rd Grade **SF Botanical Garden field trips**. Everyone enjoyed the weather, including the many different birds we observed while exploring the park.



Classroom visits are an important part of our school programs and we were delighted to be able to work with all of the classes participating in our 2006-2007 program. The students learned about beaks, wings, bones and the body structure of birds through a series of hands on activities.



Third Grade student examines a pelican beak during a classroom visit at Jean Parker Elementary.

2 – Birding for Everyone – Naturalist Angie Geiger’s Report from the Field, January 6, 2007



We started by going through the gate in the parking lot in the hope of seeing the Varied Thrush we had missed last time. And luckily, the first birds we saw were two Varied Thrush! Then someone called out, What’s that big woodpecker with a red head? There was a particularly bright Red-Breasted Sapsucker only about one foot from the base of a small tree. Everyone in the group got great views of both species. We moved toward the California section and were admiring an Anna’s Hummingbird singing and doing a flight display when a commotion in the sky caught my attention. A Red-Shouldered Hawk was chasing a Great Egret, which flew directly over our heads. The Hawk then perched in a Cyprus out in the open in full sunshine. It was an adult bird and the lighting offered us a good look.

We walked through the Redwood Forest and on the other side, as we were nearing the Succulent Garden, we found a flock of Pygmy Nuthatches going up and down the trunk of a tree. We had good looks at their foraging behavior.

Next we went into the succulent garden where there was much avian activity. The pair of Nuthatches was still busily working on the nest hole in the Century Plant stalk. They chased away any birds that came too close. In addition to the Nuthatches, we were surrounded by hummingbirds, Ruby-Crowned Kinglets, Yellow-rumped and Townsends Warblers, Golden-Crowned and Song Sparrows and Finches. Three Red-Tailed Hawks soared overhead, with the occasional Raven in pursuit. As we were leaving, someone spotted a Hermit Thrush at eye level out in the open on a branch, and this usually shy bird seemed as interested in viewing us as we were in seeing him.

Our final spot was the Demonstration Garden, where I did the wrap-up. About half the people had already left when a mixed flock of birds suddenly appeared, including a bright White-Throated Sparrow. All of the sparrows responded amazingly well to "pishing" and sat on the bush looking at us. The White-Throated Sparrow even sang a few notes for us. A great ending to a great morning! Altogether we saw 30 species.

Birding for Everyone: Highlights



White-crowned Sparrow – Photo by Jim Sullivan



Red-breasted Sapsucker – Photo by Paul Yee



Great Egret – Photo by Jim Herd



Red-tailed Hawk – Photo by Jim Herd

Come with our naturalists to look for these and other varied and vibrant birds!

Birding for Everyone takes place the first Saturday of each month from **10 a.m. to 12 noon**. Upcoming dates are February 3, March 3 and April 7. For more information, visit our website at www.sfnature.org/calendar.html.



Adult Great Blue Heron occupies a nest at Stow Lake
– photo by Jim Sullivan

3 – Stow Lake Heron Colony 2007

Nancy DeStefanis spotted an adult heron standing in a nest at Stow Lake on Dec. 28, 2006.

2007 has some high standards to try and meet this year, as the 2006 season surpassed any other year in our 13-year study. Six nests on Heron Island accounted for a record sixteen chicks. We're hoping the 2007 season exceeds 2006.

4 – Upcoming Events

Back by Popular Demand: Free Lecture and Films

Nancy DeStefanis, Executive Director of San Francisco Nature Education, will lecture and screen the short films *Above the Nests*, directed by Nancy DeStefanis, and *Heron Island*, directed by Judy Irving (*Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill*). Nancy will also present a brief slide show of highlights of the 2006 great blue heron colony.

Sponsored by the San Francisco Naturalist Society, the films will be shown on Thursday, March 8, 7:30–9 p.m. at the Randall Museum Theater, Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, San Francisco.

5 – Bird Callers in Starring Role!

Third graders from Jose Ortega and John Yehall Chin Elementary schools who participated in the 2006 Bird Calling Contest at Mercy High School were featured in a 12-minute video production promoting SFNE's programs and educational outreach. Snippets of the movie can be viewed online at www.sfnature.org.

The short film follows SFNE's Nancy DeStefanis, Danny Mintz and Sharon Pretti as they

guide excited new birding enthusiasts through classroom orientation at school, to Golden Gate Park, where they view the springtime Great Blue Heron colony and breathlessly witness a fledgling's first flight out of the nest. On a nature hike they identify other birds they've begun to study. Afterwards, we see them preparing their dazzling costumes and working diligently on their contest presentations, culminating in the fun and color of the bird calling event itself.

In an on-camera interview at Jean Parker School, Claudia Jeung, Principal Emeritus of the San Francisco Unified School District attests, "the teachers have commented enthusiastically how engaged the children are throughout the program. Seeing the San Francisco Nature Education programs in action, I could not help but be impressed."

Emmy Award-winning television producer Rick Bacigalupi created the video as a largely pro bono project. Rick's company, BaciPix, specializes in making films for nonprofit organizations involved in issues involving the environment and social and environmental justice (www.BaciPix.com). Another segment, featuring Nancy and the Great Blue Herons, is forthcoming in the second season of his "Bay Nature on the Air" series for public television, a joint production with Bay Nature Magazine that is also viewable online at www.BayNature.com.

"Rick has been tremendous to work with," says Nancy, "and everyone loves the film. It's funny, exciting, and really shows what makes our program special."

The Bird Calling Contest DVD is now available from SFNE for \$10/copy (includes shipping and handling). Proceeds benefit the educational outreach program. To order, send a check to SFNE at the address listed below in section 9.



Rick Bacigalupi, Nancy DeStefanis and actor Jason Scott Lee at Stow Lake Heron Watch, May 20, 2006.

6 – Thanks to Our Contributors for Their Generous Support

Adobe Systems
Morris Stulsaft Foundation
The Leocha Fund of the Tides Foundation
Eagle Optics
Perma-Bound Books
Spot 'n Jot Cards
Cassa Charitable Trust

7 – Wish List

We know the holidays are over, but if you're still in the giving spirit we could really use the following items:

Our office is in need of a small copier with a feeder.

We also need new or used backpacks for students to wear during their field trips in Golden Gate Park.

8 – Volunteers Wanted

Volunteer Naturalists:

San Francisco Nature Education is looking for volunteers who enjoy spending time with children and being outdoors and who want to learn more about local birds and the natural history of Golden Gate Park.

- Lead San Francisco third graders in classroom visits and/or field trips,
- Lead hands-on bird walks for groups of six children (all groups have chaperones),
- Learn about San Francisco birds and the natural world of Golden Gate Park,
- Encourage future environmental stewards, and
- Are great role models for dozens of children!

We ask that volunteers commit at least two mornings a month.

Naturalist training is provided over four mornings for a small fee. *Some scholarships are available.*

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact San Francisco Nature Education for an application:

Phone: (415) 387-9160

E-mail: volunteer@sfnature.org

Mail: San Francisco Nature Education
3450 Geary Boulevard, Suite 208
San Francisco, CA 94118

Board of Directors Opportunities

San Francisco Nature Education is looking for new members for our Board of Directors.

SFNE offers interactive environmental education programs that develop leadership and stewardship in youth and adults. Our school programs focus primarily on students from underserved communities. We use parks and open spaces as natural classrooms to observe local and migratory birds and their habitats.

Our programs include:

- Elementary school classroom visits and field trips
- Birding for Everyone: Year-round monthly weekend birding and nature walks at San Francisco Botanical Garden
- Heron Watch: A six-week spring program at Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park that educates children and adults about the lake's fascinating heron colony

Make a difference with underserved children and the environment. Please consider joining this exciting and dynamic non-profit organization!

For more information, please contact Nancy DeStefanis, Executive Director, at nancyd@sfnature.org.

9 – Supporting San Francisco Nature Education

We serve more than 1,000 children every year from underserved San Francisco public schools. Our engaging public and school programs couldn't exist without the generous contributions of our supporters.

Would you please send a contribution today?

Please send tax-deductible contributions to:

San Francisco Nature Education
3450 Geary Boulevard, Suite 208
San Francisco, CA 94118

Make all checks payable to "San Francisco Nature Education."

Another way to support San Francisco Nature Education is by enrolling in the eScrip program, <http://www.escrip.com>.

Coming in February

Information on our spring Heron Watch program!

Please forward this e-newsletter to your friends. They can sign up to receive it by visiting the following web page: <http://www.sfnature.org/newsletter.html>.

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To stop receiving our eNewsletter, please send an e-mail with the subject UNSUBSCRIBE E-NEWS to admin@sfnature.org. Thank you.

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