

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

In this issue:

- 1 – Birding for Everyone**
- 2 – School Program Report**
- 3 – Heron Watch 2007**
- 4 – Upcoming Events**
- 5 – Nesting Season Tips**
- 6 – Tips on Disposing of Electronic Waste**
- 7 – Wish List**
- 8 – Volunteers and Interns Wanted**
- 9 – Supporting San Francisco Nature Education**

1 – Birding for Everyone: Naturalist Angie Geiger's Report from the Field, March 3, 2007

March 3rd dawned as a glorious spring day with lots of sunshine. Over fifty adults and children came to the Arboretum to enjoy the morning and the birds on the Birding for Everyone Bird Walk. Even before the walk officially started, the early arrivals were treated to a show put on by a pair of courting Red-shouldered Hawks who were calling loudly and performing aerial maneuvers directly overhead. That was a good start for a very "birdy" day. Our first stop was at the lawn in front of the fragrance garden where we were treated to a mixed flock of Golden-crowned and White-crowned Sparrows, American Robins and California Towhees. At the tops of nearby trees we also had good views of a Black Phoebe and a singing Anna's Hummingbird. After that, Nancy DeStefanis, Director of SF Nature Education, and I divided up the group into two, with Nancy taking the families with children on a different route. The main pond gave us good looks at side-by-side Western and Glaucous-winged Gulls, providing a clear comparison of the differences between the two. Also at the pond were Mew Gulls, Canada Geese, American Coots and Mallard Ducks. Our next stop was at the Chilean Bay Tree just west of the Chilean Garden. In winter we always look for the Red-breasted Sapsucker there and today we were rewarded with good looks at a very cooperative bird. We went on to the Succulent Garden where the nesting pair of Pygmy Nuthatches emerged from their nest hole in the century plant spike and frolicked in their "backyard". In addition, we were treated to several Hummingbirds, including both Anna's and Allen's, some even doing display flights. On to the Redwood Forest, where we immediately heard the lovely song of the Winter Wren. We were able to spot two of them including one that provided excellent looks for the entire group as it hung suspended upside down from a twig while it continuously rotated its tail in a "helicoptoring" motion for at least five

minutes. (An odd courtship display??) In any case, it was a phenomenal chance to study this otherwise very secretive bird. We also had some glimpses of a Varied Thrush in the same vicinity. On our way out we were reunited with Nancy and the families as they were studying an imperturbable Great Egret that was fishing in the pond across from the Bamboo forest. A very good day with a total of 28 species spotted.

Birding for Everyone: Highlights





California Towhee



Allen's Hummingbird (courtesy Jim Herd)



Red-breasted Sapsucker (courtesy Jim Sullivan)



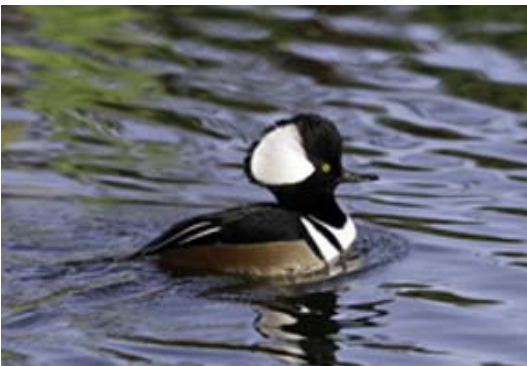
Anna's Hummingbirds (courtesy Jim Herd)

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

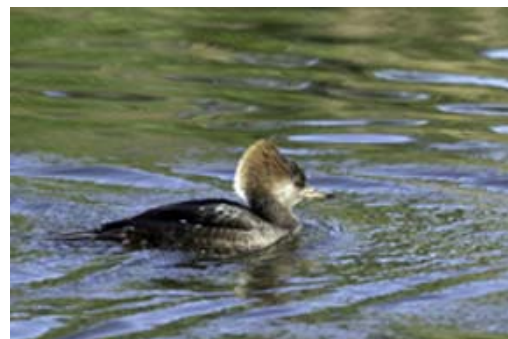
Birding for Everyone takes place the first Saturday of each month from **10 a.m. to 12 noon**. Upcoming dates are April 7 and May 5. For more information, visit our website at www.sfnature.org/calendar.html.

2 – School Program Report

We concluded our last four field trips to the San Francisco Botanical Garden last month. We were delighted when many of the students got a close up look of the male and female Hooded Mergansers in the waterfowl pond. The students will next visit Stow Lake and the nesting great blue herons.



Hooded Merganser, Male



Hooded Merganser, Female (Photos courtesy Gib Robinson)

3 – Heron Watch 2007

SFNE monitors conducted a survey of the 2007 Great Blue Heron colony at Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park on March 3, 2007. We observed six nests with at least one heron in each nest. At least three nests had herons incubating eggs. We hope to observe hatchlings in April.

The first photo shows a pair of herons performing an identical stretch display. Stretch displays help reduce antagonism and cement the pair bond between these wild birds. These birds are incredibly beautiful and charismatic, as seen in Jim Sullivan's photos. The public is invited to visit the colony for our Heron Watch program. Please see the Calendar of Events for the schedule at <http://www.sfnature.org/calendar.html> Please visit Heron Watch 2007 to see all the latest photos by Jim Sullivan.





(2007 photos courtesy Jim Sullivan)

4 – Upcoming Events: Spring 2007

“A Life With Skulls”

A free program will be held on Thursday, March 8th, 2007, from 7 pm - 8:30 pm at the Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, SF.

With more than 7,000 skulls in his collection, including 1,700 California sea lions, Ray Bandar has been collecting skulls since 1953. This humorous 30-minute documentary and tribute by Beth Cataldo, “A Life with Skulls,” celebrates this skull collector and his passion for living (and dead) things. Following the film, there will be Questions and answer session.

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, April 12, 7:30–9 p.m. at the Randall Museum Theater, Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, San Francisco.

Sixth Annual Bird Calling Contest, May 25, 2007

This year’s contest will take place in San Francisco on May 25, 2007, from 10:30 a.m. until noon. Tickets are \$10. Please send check and self addressed stamped envelope (check payable to SFNE) and mail to our office. The location will be provided with the tickets in return mail.

From the archives, the 2002 bird calling contest winners.



Allen's Hummingbirds from Sunnyside Elementary



Common Ravens from Lakeshore Elementary

5 – Nesting Season Tips

Nesting season is underway. Some of our Bay Area birds begin building nests as early as February, but a lot start in March. This activity can be spotted by noticing birds gathering twigs and fibers, or other found materials like paper scraps or string. Or, after the nest is built, the comings and goings of the birds may reveal the site to the watchful eye.

The baby birds in the nests (nestlings) need the warmth of the nest and are unable to hop or walk. Ultimately, they mature and start to test their wings in the nest, and while trying to fly leave the nest and end up on nearby trees or bushes, or on the ground. During this fledgling stage, lasting several days, they are dependent on their parents for food, and easy prey for cars, cats or other predators.

Both nestlings and fledglings may need help during nesting season. WildCare in San Rafael has a telephone hotline, the **Living with Wildlife Hotline, 415-456-SAVE**. They will answer wildlife questions 24 hours a day. If a bird is found on the ground, the situation should be carefully evaluated. Is it a nestling or a fledgling? Will it be safe in its present location? Has it been abandoned or is the parent nearby? It would be unfortunate to remove a bird that could be successfully raised by its parent. The WildCare hotline will gladly help with this decision process and will take a bird that needs care, ultimately releasing it back to the area where it was found. They give each bird an identifying number so that the outcome for the bird can be followed.

WildCare (www.wildcarebayarea.org <<http://www.wildcarebayarea.org/>>) has very useful information about wildlife on the website. Reading the "found an animal?" link on this website is great preparation for nesting season and for other wildlife interactions.

Before taking any animal to WildCare, please call first so they can be prepared for your arrival. They are open 7 days a week from 9AM to 5 PM. There is no charge, however donations are welcomed. WildCare is located at 76 Albert Park Lane, San Rafael, CA 94901, 415-453-1000.



Brown Pelicans and Double-crested Cormorant

Heermann's Gull

6 – Tips on Disposing of Electronic Waste

Almost anything considered 'electronic' is banned from landfills. These items include computers, monitors, peripherals, phones, TVs, VCRs, DVD players, stereos, microwave ovens, PDAs, iPods, etc. Customers at SF Recycling & Disposal (the dump) can dispose of up to 30 electronic items per month for free if they are delivered without any other type of garbage. More than 30 items are charged at a rate of \$1.50 per piece. If the electronics are mixed with garbage, the regular tipping fee applies. Click here for hours and directions to the SF dump <<http://www.sfdumpster.com/sfdump.htm>> . In addition, many Goodwill stores accept working and non-working electronics.

7 – Wish List

Our program is in need of some extra backpacks for our students to use on our field trips. Donations are tax deductible and always appreciated.

8 – Volunteers and Interns 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 visit our website and click on Volunteer Opportunities or Intern Opportunities.

Questions:

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>.

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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subject UNSUBSCRIBE E-NEWS to admin@sfnature.org. Thank you.