



Out & About in the City

Blue Heron Newsletter • February 2009

Executive Director's Corner

Nancy DeStefanis

Dear Friends:

Now, more than ever, San Francisco Nature Education needs your support.

For the first time, we will request a \$10 donation for all our nature walks on Saturdays.

Our coffers are very depleted. We need your support so that SF Nature can survive. No donation will be requested for children.

No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

Please continue to support us in these difficult times. You can donate online at: www.sfnature.org/get_involved/index.html

Or mail a donation to:

SF Nature Education
3450 Geary Blvd. Suite 208
San Francisco, CA 94118

Many thanks and best regards,

Nancy DeStefanis

Third Graders in the San Francisco Botanical Garden

Tina Lui, naturalist

Our field trips to the San Francisco Botanical Garden for third graders from ER Taylor Elementary School (in SF's Portola district) were a huge success. The students were eager to spot birds, and were rewarded with up-close and personal views of the California Quail, Red-shouldered Hawk, Turkey Vulture, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, and Pygmy Nuthatch (partial list). The "alone walk" through the bamboo forest delighted all the students.

We caught glimpses, in the surrounding grasses and brush, of a European Starling, an American Kestrel, and an American Crow. Smaller birds included the iridescent Anna's Hummingbird and the Savannah Sparrow.



Photo: SFNE

Using binoculars for birding in the Botanical Garden.



Photo: SFNE

Teacher Ms. Chiu, left, with naturalists Linda Grant, Beth Kamieniecki, and E.R. Taylor third graders at the Botanical Garden.

Upcoming Events:

Thursday, Feb. 12, Lecture at the Randall Museum:
Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915

Saturday, March 7, in the SF Botanical Garden:
Birding for Everyone

Saturday, March 7, in the Bayview District:
Bird Watching in Heron's Head Park (last tour!)



Preparing to sketch in their journals.

Third-grade classroom visits and field trips to the San Francisco Botanical Garden



Naturalist Andy Kleinhesselink, center, teacher Ms. Elmansouri, and students.



Student explains how the Dodo became extinct.



Bird watching with binoculars in the field.



Enjoying the "alone walk."



Handling a Great Blue Heron skull in the classroom.



Teacher Ms. Elmansouri, naturalist Beth Kamieniecki and students show off their different wingspans.



Naturalist Tina Lui, chaperone, and students.

Bird Watching at Heron's Head Park

Nancy DeStefanis, executive director, SFNE

Saturday, February 7th was a beautiful, sunny day at Heron's Head Park. Lowell High School interns led four tours for the 40 people who arrived for bird watching. Thirty-four different species of birds were spotted. Highlights included the Harlequin Duck and Eurasian Wigeon. Don't miss our *last tour* for this year: Saturday, March 7, 2009.



Photo: SFNE

Naturalist Aileen (at scope) and instructor Allan Ridley with group.



Photo: SFNE

Another observer views Harlequin Duck.



Photo: Len Blumin

Harlequin Duck



Photo: SFNE

Mary Hackenbracht, president of SFNE board of directors, third from left, joins others on a tour led by interns Rosanna and Aileen (lower right).

Please Join Us for the Final Tour of the Season!

Heron's Head Park: Public tours, 10 a.m.—noon at Jennings Street and Cargo, 2 blocks south of Pier 96. For access by public transportation go to: www.sfmta.com. Free parking available in lot outside park.

Date: Saturday, March 7, 2009

Interns will be joined by Nancy DeStefanis and SF Nature Education naturalists Sachi Jain and Alan Hopkins.

Co-sponsored by Literacy for Environmental Justice (LEJ), Port of San Francisco, and Golden Gate Audubon Society (GGAS).



Photo: SFNE

Observer views Eurasian Duck.



Photo: Valtter Jacinto

Eurasian Duck



Photo: SFNE

Intern Ruby explains park history to her tour group.



Photo: SFNE

Lowell intern, Tina, carries scope on public tour.



Photo: SFNE

Lowell H.S. coordinator, nurse Maryann Rainey (third from left), interns Aileen and Rosanna, and their tour group.

Birding for Everyone

Sachi Jain, naturalist



Photo: Judy Harter

White-crowned Sparrow

Naturalists Brian Fitch, Beth Kamieniecki, and I led a tour on Saturday, February 7th for a group of 20 birding enthusiasts in the San Francisco Botanical Garden in Golden Gate Park.

Sponsored by SF Nature Education, the *Birding for Everyone* walks are meant to enhance the public's awareness of wild birds that populate our city's green parks.

We began our tour at the Demonstration Garden near the bookstore, where melodious bird calls lured us toward a row of bushes. Nestled there were several White-crowned Sparrows and a Yellow-rumped Warbler, alternately hopping along the branches and singing. We continued toward the Wildfowl Pond, where a flock of American Coots waddled on the ground with their comically large yellow feet.

A pair of Mallards dove into the pond; the male's bright green neck and gray body contrasted sharply with the female's mottled brown markings. Several gull species—including a Western Gull, Mew Gull, and California Gull—flew overhead and descended nearby.

To our delight, we saw a Great Blue Heron stalking its prey behind a rocky island in the pond. After ten minutes the heron spread its majestic wings and flew off less than ten feet in front of us.



Photo: Judy Harter

Great Blue Heron

Following our waterfowl adventure, we ascended to the Succulent Garden, where male Song Sparrows burst into a chorus to claim their patches of territory.

A pair of Bushtits rustled in the foliage, occasionally fluttering into full view before disappearing again. Two Red-tailed Hawks circled the sky in the distance, displaying their rufus-colored tails and dark wing bars.



Photo: Judy Harter

Allen's Hummingbird

These birds were followed by a flock of Common Ravens, which are distinguishable from the closely related Common Crow by their V-shaped tails. A male Anna's Hummingbird perched on the tip of a branch, while an Allen's

Hummingbird—identifiable by its orange head and back—flew in search of nectar.

As we headed back toward the entrance, we spotted the dull-brown California Towhee hopping across the dirt trail. Other birds seen on our trip were the Western Scrub Jay, Red-breasted Sapsucker, and the Black Phoebe. We counted at least 30 birds on our trip, and our group was satisfied with both the number and diversity of birds seen in just two hours.



Photo: Judy Harter

Western Scrub Jay

Birding for Everyone meets on first Saturdays in March, April, and May. Join us at 10 am near the bookstore inside the main gate of the SF Botanical Garden in Golden Gate Park (MLK Dr. near 9th Ave. & Lincoln Way).

Wish List

Used or new binoculars, backpacks, and microscopes for our programs.



The SF Naturalists Society presents a free lecture:

Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915

Nancy DeStefanis will present a slide show, movie footage, and music of the Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915.

The presentation will include rarely seen images, including dramatic opening-day footage provided by the Prelinger Archives.

Thursday, Feb. 12, 7:30 – 9 pm
Randall Museum, 55 Museum Way
Corona Heights, San Francisco
www.randallmuseum.org

For access by public transportation go to:
www.sfmta.com Free parking outside the Randall Museum.

For more information please visit
www.sfnature.org

DONATE TO SF NATURE EDUCATION VIA THE COMMUNITY THRIFT STORE

San Francisco Nature Education is excited to announce that we are now part of the Community Thrift Store. This is a great way to give back and get some spring cleaning out of the way.

When you donate items, be sure to say, "These items are for SF Nature Education," so that approximately 40% of the sale price of your items will help support our efforts to bring science and nature education to undeserved youth.

Welcome donations:

Artwork, Picture Frames
Clothing
Jewelry
Books
Furniture
CDs, DVDs, vinyl records
Housewares
Bric-a-brac

Call (415) 861-4910 for deliveries and special item inquiries.

Community Thrift Store
623-625 Valencia Street
between 17th & 18th
San Francisco, CA 94110

The donation door is located on Sycamore Alley, parallel to & north of 18th Street, between Mission and Valencia. It runs ONE WAY: west towards Valencia.

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Contact San Francisco Nature Education:
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telephone: 415-387-9160
www.sfnature.org