



# The Blue Heron

News from San Francisco Nature Education • November 2016

## Executive Director's Corner

Dear Friends,

I am writing to ask for your support for our upcoming programs in 2017. Your contributions fund our school field trips for underserved students in kindergarten through fourth grades, intern programs that have trained more than 110 students from city schools, and our year-round Saturday programs for adults and families.

All Saturday nature walks are free to members. We offer 24 field trips each year with trained naturalists in small groups. Members receive a link to a monthly online newsletter with stories on conservation, field trips, reviews of nature films and books, and spectacular photos of the natural world.

To date we have served more than 15,000 students in San Francisco. Please consider a generous gift:

\$1,500 funds one class for a year of classroom visits and field trips. \$500 funds one student for a season internship. \$100 funds one Saturday field trip.

We depend on your donations. Please renew your membership and include a gift. Thank you so much for your continued support.

Best regards,

*Nancy*

Nancy DeStefanis

### New address and phone:

San Francisco Nature Education  
PO Box 210303  
San Francisco, CA 94121

e-mail: [info@sfnature.org](mailto:info@sfnature.org)  
telephone: 415-205-0776

SF Nature Education membership: Adults, \$35;  
Seniors 65+, \$30;  
students 21 or under, \$20.



[www.sfnature.org](http://www.sfnature.org)

## Fall and Winter Classroom Visits Begin! Nancy DeStefanis, Executive Director



We have almost a full roster of K-4 classes signed up for our school program of winter and spring classroom visits and field trips.

In October we conducted classroom visits to the third and fourth grades at St. Thomas the Apostle. The students studied how birds fly, the role of adaptation in the different shapes of bird beaks, and they sketched real stuffed birds.



Clockwise from above: Fourth graders draw a Canada Goose and California Quail in the classroom; teacher Mrs. Powers passes around bird beaks; hands-on learning.



The students will walk through the SF Botanical Garden in small groups in November, led by trained SFNE naturalists.

We have a few openings left for winter and spring. If you know a teacher or principal who might be interested in our program, please tell them about it. They can email us at [info@sfnature.org](mailto:info@sfnature.org).



Photos: SFNE



### On the pages ahead:

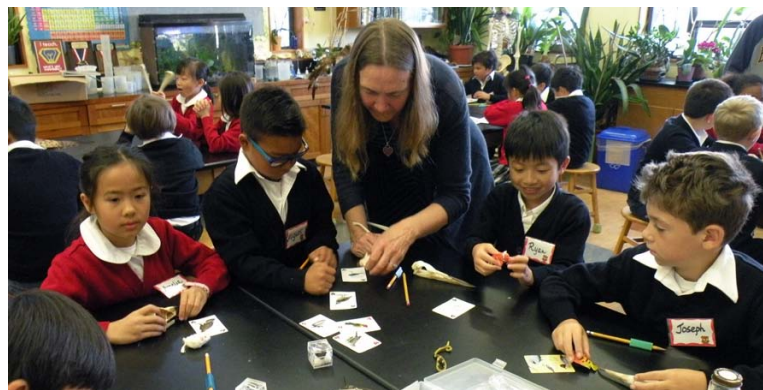
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**Our recent third-grade classroom visit included some typical human and avian behaviors.**

Far left: Third-graders sketch stuffed birds; near left and middle row: taking turns modeling hawk flight posture and wings. Bottom row: drawing a stuffed Red-tailed Hawk and matching beaks with birds (with Mrs Powers).



Photos: SFNE



## Birding for Everyone, October 1st

Sarah Barsness, Naturalist



The weather for our October Birding for Everyone field trip in the San Francisco Botanical Garden was sunny but cool. Unfortunately, a Giants game and the music festival in the park seem to have discouraged participants. We were a group of six, but did not let that dampen our anticipation. We were not disappointed—fall migrants have



returned in full force, and we saw nearly 40 species!

The Monkey Hand tree at the main entry was busy—many **American Robins**, a handful of **Yellow Warblers** (now on their way south for the winter), and a glimpse of a Yellow-rumped Warbler.

*Butter Butt* will be the most common warbler in San Francisco in the winter months, and it was nice to see one of the first arrivals. We will mostly see the Audubon type of **Yellow-rumped Warbler** in San Francisco, primarily distinguished from the Myrtle type by a bright yellow chin. These two types used to be considered separate species, but have been considered one since



1973. The splitting of these two types into separate species again may be imminent, according to the Cornell avian lab.

Also returned to San Francisco are the wintering sparrows. During the summer months we only see

three species of sparrows: **Song Sparrows**, **Dark-eyed Juncos**, and the local resident Nuttall's **White-crowned Sparrows**. In the winter, these are joined by Sooty **Fox Sparrows**, **Golden-crowned Sparrows**, and the Gambel's **White-crowned Sparrows**, along with other,

more transient visitors. All of these birds were active in the arboretum during our visit.

Early fall is a rare opportunity to hear the songs of the Fox Sparrow and the Golden-crowned Sparrow—they do most of their singing on their summer breeding grounds. The Fox Sparrow usually sings his rich, whistled song from inside a thicket, and it wafted to us occasionally as we walked. The Golden-crowned is more likely to sing from a tree, and in the California Garden we heard his mournful “oh-dear-me” from above in the chestnut tree, and watched as he offered up a late-season concert.

We heard the distinctive call of a **Red-tailed Hawk**, and as we approached the Redwood Grove a hawk flew over quickly, with a distinctly fanned tail, and what appeared to be darker leading edges. We ruled out a Cooper's Hawk and settled instead on juvenile Red-tailed Hawk. In reviewing my quick photo I learned, once again, the pitfalls of assumptions! This was a magnificent **Red-shouldered Hawk** with a distinctly banded tail.



We caught glimpses of a **Pacific Wren** in the Redwood Grove, close to the ground, with his tail straight up. While we heard snatches of a song, we also heard the distinctive two-part chip note. In the fall, when birds are not singing as much, it is helpful (and more challenging) to distinguish chip notes.



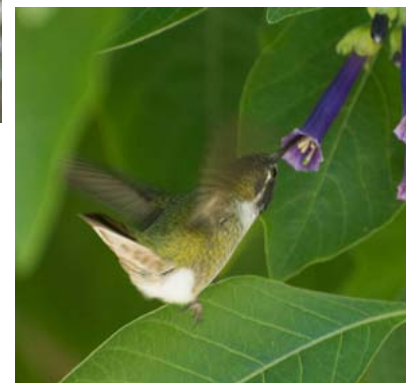
Along the way to the Children's Garden we enjoyed encounters with a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** (very close to the spot where I saw my very first one!) and a **Pacific Slope Flycatcher**, as well as a nice view of a **Downy Woodpecker**. Heading back, we walked above the Succulent Garden and were nicely surprised by a pair of **Warbling Vireos**, which perched for us on a nearby tree. The word *vireo* means “green migratory bird.” They are nearly exclusive to the New World, and are possibly related to corvids!



Here in San Francisco

we see Hutton's and Warbling Vireos, both small greenish passerines. While there are many differences between the two, the eye area—as in so many birds—is key for identification. While Hutton's Vireos have a distinct white eye ring, Warbling Vireos have a white brow, giving them a very different expression.

*continued on next page*



Clockwise from far left: American Robin; Fox Sparrow; Pygmy Nuthatch; Anna's Hummingbird; Black Phoebe; White-crowned Sparrow; Townsend's Warbler (center). **Photos by Sarah Barsness**



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Tired but happy, we made our way back to the main gate, taking a quick look at the Wildfowl Pond to see if we could spot the **Belted Kingfisher** that had crossed my path earlier. No luck, but we admired a perfectly still, elegant **Great Blue Heron**. The migrants are

wonderful, but the resident birds remain the closest to our hearts.



Clockwise from above left: California Scrub Jay; Gray Squirrel; Pacific Wren (2x); Monarch Butterfly; young Yellow Warbler; Great Blue Heron. **Photos by Grace Ruth, except heron, by Jeff Harter**

**SF Botanical Garden**  
**10/01/2016**  
**Compiled by Sarah Barsness**  
**Birds: 37 species**  
 Great Blue Heron – 1  
 Turkey Vulture – 1  
 Canada Goose – 5  
 Mallard – 2  
 Great Blue Heron – 1  
 Cooper's Hawk - 1  
 Red-shouldered Hawk - 1  
 Red-tailed Hawk – 1  
 California Gull – 1  
 Rock Dove – 7  
 Anna's Hummingbird – 12  
 Nuttall's Woodpecker – 1  
 Downy Woodpecker – 1  
 Pacific Slope Flycatcher – 1  
 Black Phoebe – 2  
 Warbling Vireo – 2  
 Steller's Jay – 2

California Scrub Jay – 3  
 American Crow – 3  
 Common Raven – 1  
 Chestnut-backed Chickadee – 5  
 Bushtit – 12  
 Pygmy Nuthatch – 15  
 Pacific Wren – 2  
 Ruby Crowned Kinglet – 1  
 Hermit Thrush – 1  
 American Robin – 14  
 Yellow Warbler – 3  
 Townsend's Warbler – 3  
 Fox Sparrow  
 Dark-eyed Junco – 5  
 White-crowned Sparrow – 6  
 Golden-crowned Sparrow – 2  
 Song Sparrow – 6  
 California Towhee – 2  
 Brewer's Blackbird – 7  
 House Finch – 7



## Spring Internship Applications Now Online

Middle, high school, and college students: Apply for a spring internship and learn about Great Blue Herons, their chicks, and other local birds at Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park.

Deadline to apply: Feb. 17, 2017. Training will begin in March.

Interns will learn to use spotting scopes, field guides, and binoculars, and communication strategies for talking to the public. Community service hours are available upon request.

Dates, information, and applications are available at: [http://sfnature.org/get\\_involved/intern.html](http://sfnature.org/get_involved/intern.html).

\$100 internship fee; scholarships available.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**SF Nature Walks:** From 10 am to noon; rain cancels all walks. Please bring binoculars if you can, and a pencil. For directions see our [events calendar](#).

**Birding for Everyone:** First Saturdays from 10 am to noon in the SF Botanical Garden. Next: Nov. 5, with Sarah Barsness; also Dec. 3 and Jan 7.

Meet at SF Botanical Garden bookstore, 9th Ave. near Lincoln. SFNE members FREE. \$10 per nonmember adult, children welcome (free).

**SF Botanical Garden:** Free for SF residents with proof of residency; non-residents pay a fee.

**Heron's Head Park** with Megan Prelinger: Nov. 12. Meet at trailhead. Volunteers will have spotting scopes for close-up views.

**Chain of Lakes** with Alan Hopkins: Dec. 10  
SFNE members FREE. \$10 per nonmember adult, children welcome (free).

### FREE PROGRAM

Wednesday, Nov. 9th @ 7:00 p.m.  
Merced Branch Library  
155 Winston Drive, SF 415 355-5651

### ISHI—THE LAST OF HIS TRIBE, 100 YEARS LATER

Lecture/slideshow by Nancy DeStefanis



Ishi (1861-1916) was widely acclaimed in his time as the "last wild Indian" in America. Ishi lived most of his life in hiding near Deer Creek in Tehama County, CA.

In 1911, he left his hiding place after his family died. He hiked to Oroville, where he was captured.

Rather than move to a reservation he chose to live at the Anthropology Museum (at the current site of UCSF Parnassus).

On the 100th anniversary of his passing his story is an important reminder of the impact of the Gold Rush on California Indians.

## SUPPORT SAN FRANCISCO NATURE EDUCATION!

Please donate generously to support our school and Saturday programs!

One year of classroom and field trips for K-4: \$1,500

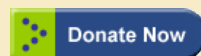
Field guides, training, and binoculars for a new intern: \$500

### Renew your membership

Individual: \$35

Senior: \$30

Two seniors, same address: \$50



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## Please support our sponsors this Holiday Season!



*At the heart of the image*



### Prostaff 3s

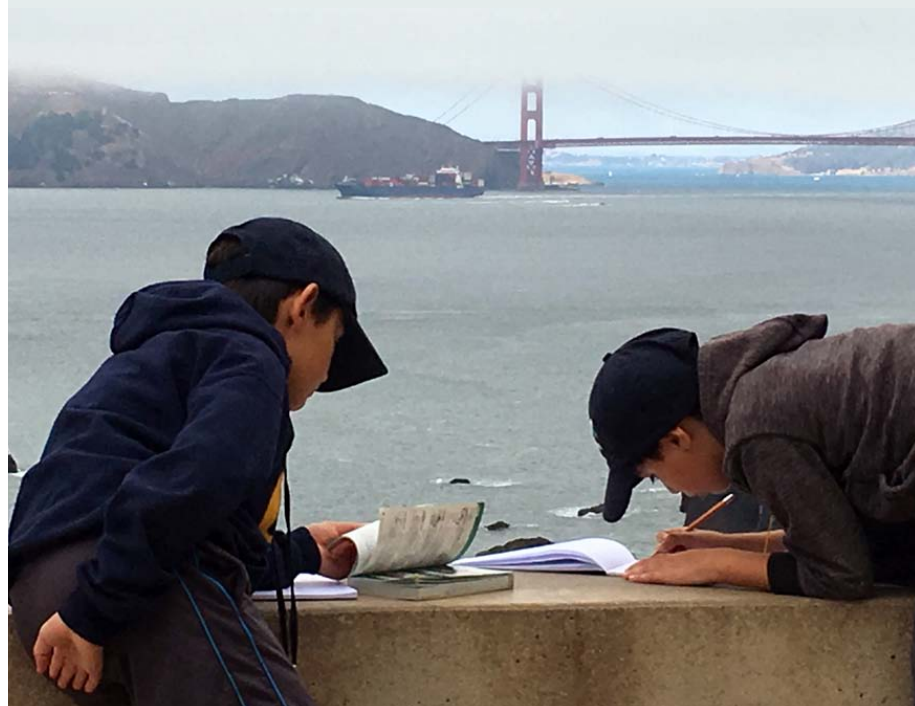
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Two of our students sketching birds at Lands End.

Photo credit: SFNE



**1** Taken two and a half hours after chick hatched. Mom has tamped down most of the egg shell. Chick's wet head is beginning to dry.



**2** The next time the mom stood up you could see that the chick's head is much dryer. Egg shells have been moved over to the side.



**3** Four and a half hours after hatching, Mom has begun feeding the chick. Dad stands nearby.

## A Flamingo Hatches at the San Francisco Zoo

Captions and photos  
by Grace Ruth



**6** Full view of day-old chick, all dry and fluffy.



**5** This close-up shows the egg tooth that the chick uses to peck its way out of the egg. The red marks by Dad's beak are crop milk being fed to chick.



**4** Later, Dad was feeding too, standing next to the nest.

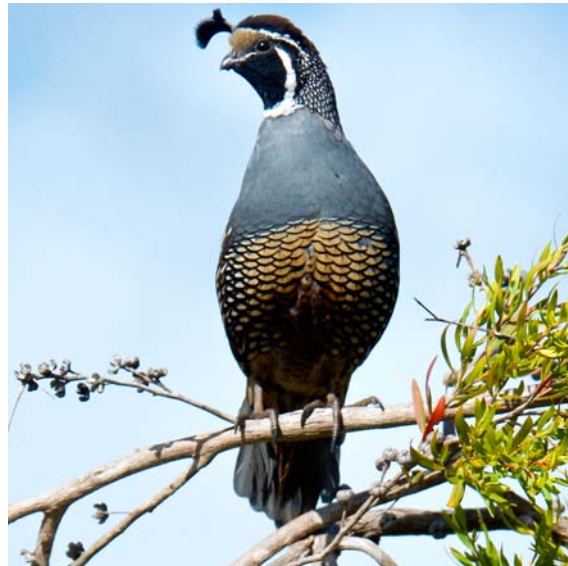




### **Rare Leucistic Anna's Hummingbird Seen at the Santa Cruz Arboretum (Among Other Local Residents)**

Leucistic birds' feathers are deficient in melanin pigment because they are missing the necessary cells. Albinism is a separate genetic condition that can turn a bird's plumage pale. There are distinct differences between albino and leucistic birds. This Anna's Hummingbird is not an albino; its bill and eyes are dark, and there is some pigment in the feathers.

**Photos & commentary  
by Sandi Wong**



Clockwise from above right:  
California Quail, male  
and female; lizards.

