

Executive Director's Corner



Dear Friends,

The herons have arrived at Stow Lake! I have seen as many as six at one time in the Great Blue Heron Tree. They are occupying existing nests. One nest already has two herons in it. During February, the male herons will find partners and begin their courtship rituals.

So far three student interns have signed up for Heron Watch. We look forward to introducing them on Opening Day, April 14th.

The Red-tailed Hawk has returned to its nest in the tree next to the Great Blue Heron Tree! It held four baby hawks last year.

We are looking for adult volunteers to donate two Saturday mornings at Heron Watch this spring. More information follows.

Please join us at Birding for Everyone in the SF Botanical Garden on Saturday, February 3rd, and Crissy Field on February 10th.

Best regards,

Nancy

Nancy DeStefanis

Membership: Adults, \$35; Seniors 65+, \$30; students 21 or under, \$20.

Renew or join by linking to [Donate Now](#) below, or send a check to:

PO Box 210303, San Francisco CA 94121

e-mail: info@sfnature.org

telephone: 415-205-0776

www.sfnature.org



Nancy DeStefanis

A Great Blue Heron returns to a nest built last spring at Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park. Below: a volunteer and visitor observe Great Blue Herons in 2017.



SFNE

On the pages ahead:

- 2 Heron's Head Park, January 13th
- 3 Heron's Head Park, cont.
- 4 Birding for Everyone, January 6th
- 5 Volunteers Needed for Heron Watch 2018!
- 6 Upcoming Events; Heron Watch Student Interns
- 7 Birds in my Bay Area Backyard



Heron's Head Park, January 13th Megan Prelinger, Naturalist

Light morning fog burned off to reveal a bright day as our group assembled.

Black Phoebes and **Anna's Hummingbirds** flitted in the vicinity of the EcoCenter as we trained scopes on the aquatic species in the basin south of the path. Heron's Head Park offers critical wintering habitat for migratory aquatic species, and these were the focus of our exploration.

The basin waters didn't disappoint: we found **Ruddy Ducks**, **Buffleheads**, **Pied-billed Grebes**, **Double-crested Cormorants**, and **American Coots**. Further along, the grassy meadow and its shrubs east of the EcoCenter held three species of **sparrows** and **Yellow-rumped Warblers**.

The waters of Lash Lighter Basin north of the park's land mass were filled with wintering **American Wigeon** pairs accompanied by **Horned Grebes** and more small

ducks. A pair of **Black Oystercatchers** perched and dozed on the abandoned pier in the basin.

The marshes on the south side of the park held a full complement of wintering shorebirds, including **Black-bellied Plover**, **Whimbrel**, **Marbled Godwit**, and **Long-billed Curlew**, along with **Stilts** and **Avocets**. Small "peeps" (**Least** and **Western Sandpiper**) swirled in small flocks along the shore on both sides, and two **Spotted Sandpipers** browsed the rocky north shoreline. A solitary species, the two browsed separately.

Other wintering species included migratory terns and gulls: **Forster's Terns** were abundant, as were **Mew Gulls** and one **Iceland Gull** (Thayer's), among the resident **California** and **Western Gull** species. The waters of India Basin were filled with more wigeons and the larger grebes, **Western** and **Clark's**.

continued on next page



Clockwise from top left: Spotted Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper; Greater Yellowlegs, Horned Grebe. Photos by Grace Ruth.

continued from previous page

Total: 43 Species:

Canada Goose - 2
American Wigeon - 35
Mallard - 4
Bufflehead - 20
Ruddy Duck - 18
Pied-billed Grebe - 3
Horned Grebe - 5
Eared Grebe - 1
Western Grebe - 3
Clark's Grebe - 1
Western/Clark's Grebe - 10
Double-crested Cormorant - 12
Great Blue Heron - 3
Great Egret - 1
Snowy Egret - 1
Turnkey Vulture - 1
Red-tailed Hawk - 1
American Coot - 12
Black-necked Stilt - 9
American Avocet - 7
Black Oystercatcher - 2
Black-bellied Plover - 1

Whimbrel - 1
Long-billed Curlew - 1
Marbled Godwit - 1
Least Sandpiper - 24
Western Sandpiper - 2
Spotted Sandpiper - 2
Greater Yellowlegs - 1
Willet - 20
Mew Gull - 30
Western Gull - 80
California Gull - 24
Iceland Gull (Thayer's) - 1
Forster's Tern - 9
Rock Pigeon - 30
Anna's Hummingbird - 2
Black Phoebe - 2
Common Raven - 2
European Starling - 10
Yellow-rumped Warbler - 1
White-crowned Sparrow - 3
Golden-crowned Sparrow - 7
Song Sparrow - 4

From top: Bufflehead pair, American Wigeon (female).
Heron's Head group: Megan Prelinger second from left,
Nancy DeStefanis second from right.



Grace Ruth



Grace Ruth



SFNE



Birding for Everyone, January 6th

Sarah Barsness and Megan Prelinger, Naturalists

On a crisp winter day our large group divided into two so adults with children could walk with their own naturalist. In the particular sunshine that follows a night of rain, the Botanical Garden was alive with resident and migratory birdlife.

Winter migrants included arboreal species such as **Townsend's Warblers**, **Cedar Waxwings**, **Hermit Thrushes**, and **Fox and Golden-crowned Sparrows**. Among migrants, numerous **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** contrasted with a lone female **Varied Thrush**. Every corner of the garden hosted **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, of which some are resident and others migratory.

In local breeding birds we observed first-winter pale primaries on young local **Black Phoebes**, and two first-winter **Pied-billed Grebes** (lacking any dappling on their bills). Many Pied-billed Grebes breed in the freshwater lakes of our urban parklands. Other aquatics were **Mallards** and an **American Coot**, with one flyover **Western Gull**.

Sightings of particular interest included a flock of **Bushtits** feeding in the Moon-viewing Garden in bright sunlight, and an **Orange-crowned Warbler** in the Children's Garden. One **Hutton's Vireo** was browsing a tree near the Fragrance Garden. We noted the abundance of birdsong, as three weeks past the solstice the day is already growing longer.

American Robins were numerous and noisy, warming up a repertoire of springtime calls. In the Redwood Grove two resident **Pacific Wrens** were calling back and forth in long melodies not heard since the close of last summer.

Red-tailed Hawks displayed a range of ages and color morphs as they circled overhead, with one first-year bird displaying very pale belly and underwings, while two adults were very dark. Local **Red-shouldered Hawks** were calling. Observed: 35 species.

Pied-billed Grebe - 2
Mallard - 2
Red-shouldered Hawk - 3
Red-tailed Hawk - 5
American Coot - 1
Western Gull - 1
Band-tailed Pigeon - 1
Rock Dove - 5
Anna's Hummingbird - 18
Northern Flicker - 2
Nuttall's Woodpecker - 1
Black Phoebe - 5
Hutton's Vireo - 1
Steller's Jay - 2
California Scrub Jay - 1
American Crow - 4
Common Raven - 4
Chestnut-backed Chickadee - 3

Bushtit - 5
Pygmy Nuthatch - 5
Pacific Wren - 3
Ruby-crowned Kinglet - 4
Hermit Thrush - 1
American Robin - 20
Varied Thrush - 1
Cedar Waxwing - 3
Yellow-rumped Warbler - 10
Townsend's Warbler - 3
Orange-crowned Warbler - 1
California Towhee - 4
Fox Sparrow - 4
Song Sparrow - 6
Golden-crowned Sparrow - 6
Dark-eyed Junco - 10
Lesser Goldfinch - 4



Top row: from left: Golden-crowned Sparrow, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Lesser Goldfinch. Bottom row: Pied-billed Grebe, Bushtit. Photos by Sarah Barsness.



ADULT VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR HERON WATCH IN APRIL AND MAY!

Requirements: two Saturdays from
9 am-1 pm during the six-week
Heron Watch Season.

New volunteers: attend one
1-hour orientation in March or
early April.

Deadline to apply: Friday,
March 16, 2018. Download an
application:

[Heron Watch Volunteer Application](#)



Scenes from previous Heron Watch programs at Stow Lake: volunteers and visitors observe nesting herons and hawks. Above: student interns, in pink and green, with friends at the observation site. Photos: SFNE, except Red-tailed Hawk: David Sullivan. The Red-tailed Hawk arrived back in its original nest in late January, 2018

A Backyard Northern Flicker
Photo by Sandi Wong

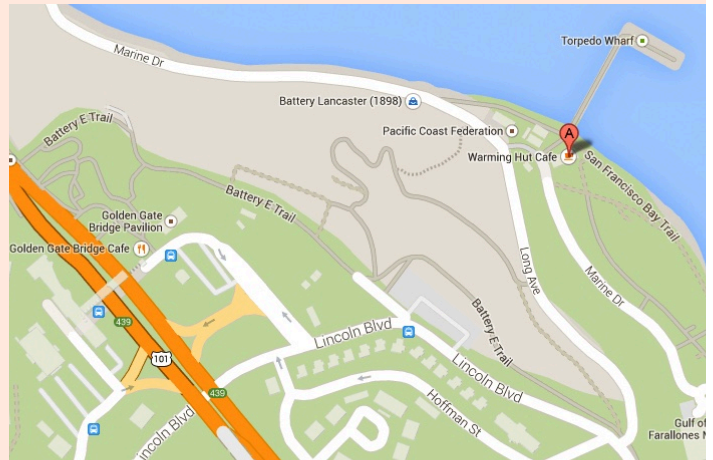


UPCOMING EVENTS

SF Nature Walks: From 10 am to noon; rain cancels all walks. Members free, non-members \$10, children always free. 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: Feb. 3, also Mar. 3, with either Megan Prelinger or Sarah Barsness. Meet at SF Botanical Garden bookstore, 9th Ave. near Lincoln. **SF Botanical Garden:** Free to SF residents with proof of residency; non-residents pay a fee.

Birding Crissy Field: Saturday, February 10, from 10 am to noon. Meet outside Warming Hut.



SUPPORT US!

San Francisco
Nature
Education



Membership: Adults, \$35;
Seniors 65+, \$30; students
21 or under, \$20.

e-mail: info@sfnature.org
telephone: 415-205-0776
PO Box 210303, SF CA 94121
www.sfnature.org

San Francisco Nature Education is in its 18th year of delivering comprehensive environmental education programs to students from schools in the San Francisco Unified School District.

Student Interns Needed for Heron Watch 2018!

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. 9, 2018. 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. Internship fee; scholarships available.

Adult volunteers are also needed!
See details on previous page.

Dates, information, and applications are available at: http://sfnature.org/get_involved/intern.html.



Birds in my Bay Area Backyard

Photos by Sandi Wong

Clockwise from top left: House Finches, Golden-crowned Sparrow, American Robin sunbathing, Eurasian Collared Doves, Dark-eyed Junco, White-crowned Sparrow.

