



# The Blue Heron

News from San Francisco Nature Education • October 2019



## A Banner Year for Nesting Herons at Stow Lake

Dear Friends,

2019 was our best nesting season ever. In the 26 years since the Great Blue Herons began nesting at Stow Lake, in 1993, this year we had the most nests ever—eight—and the most chicks ever—21! Our colony now has a grand total of 232 fledged chicks. For a detailed chronology of each year since the herons began nesting at Stow Lake, please visit our website and go to *Programs: Heron Chronology*.

During the ten Saturdays that our dedicated volunteers staffed the spotting scopes, answered questions, and led field trips, more than 2,500 adults and children joined us for the exciting experience of seeing the heron chicks up-close and personal (and the Red-tailed Hawk chicks in an adjacent tree).

We are now planning our winter field trips: monthly nature walks at the SF Botanical Garden; quarterly family field trips also at the garden (and in spring at Stow Lake); and trips to Chain of Lakes and Heron's Head Park.

Please see our list of upcoming trips on page 5.

As we approach our 20th year, please contribute to our end-of-year campaign, and give generously to our matching grant from the Friends of Pat Kearns (see page 2). All contributions are tax-deductible. Thank you for your continuing support.

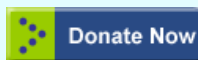
Many thanks.

Nancy DeStefanis  
Executive Director

Membership: Adults, \$35; Seniors 65+, \$30; Joint Membership for two seniors at same residence \$50; 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](mailto:info@sfnature.org)  
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From top: nesting heron delivers a stick to its mate; a pair of herons bond during the mating season. Photos by Howard Levy.

San Francisco Nature Education is in its 19th year of delivering comprehensive environmental education programs to students from schools in the San Francisco Unified School District.

### On the pages ahead:

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## Matching Grant to Honor Friend & Volunteer Patricia Kearns, 1943–2019



Pat Kearns in classroom preparing third-graders for spring field trip to Stow Lake.

Longtime friend and SF Nature Education supporter and donor Pat Kearns recently passed away from pancreatic cancer. Pat helped with our programs in many ways over the years—since our founding in 2000, and even during her illness.

Pat volunteered at every Bird Calling Contest since 2002 at the Randall Museum.

She regularly volunteered in third-grade classrooms if a scheduled naturalist was unavailable since she retired as an RN at UCSF Breast Care Center in 2006. Prior to retiring, in 2004, she received the Daisy Foundation Award for Extraordinary Nurses

She was a familiar face at the Saturday Stow Lake Heron Watch observation site. Each year she visited with our interns during the nesting season. Her infectious smile and welcoming nature always put everyone at ease. She always encouraged the interns in their interactions with park visitors.

Her last visit to Stow Lake was Saturday, May 11, 2019. She will be missed and never forgotten.

Friends of Pat have offered a matching grant of \$10,000 in her honor to support our underserved student field trip fund, our low-income student internship fund and SF Nature Education work in general. Every dollar donated between October 1 and December 31, 2019 will be matched by donors.

*Nancy DeStefanis*

**Please support  
our programs and  
matching grant!**



**San Francisco  
Nature  
Education**



Photos: SFNE

Top: Volunteers at first Bird Calling Contest at Randall Museum May, 2002. From left: Pat Kearns, Amy Dawson, Nancy DeStefanis, Arthur Bedikian, Mary Ellen Doyle, and Jack Laws. Above: Pat Kearns with Heron Watch interns, May 11, 2019.

**San Francisco Nature Education is a 501(c)3 organization and your donation is tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law. Our tax ID number is 54-2111941.**

**Please donate online or mail a check (payable to SFNE) to:  
PO Box 210303, SF CA 94121**

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**SF Nature Walks:** Adults \$10, children always free. **RAIN CANCELS.**

**Birding for Everyone:** First Saturdays, 10 am to noon in the SF Botanical Garden. Meet at SFBG bookstore, 9th Ave. near Lincoln. Garden admission is free to SF residents; non-residents pay a fee. Next walks: Oct. 5 and Nov. 2 for adults and youth ages 12 and up. Families, see below.

**Birding for Families:** Nov. 2. Meet inside the SF Botanical Garden's main gate next to the admission booth. From 10 to noon for children ages 4–11 with their parents or guardians.

**Heron's Head Park:** Nov. 9, from 10 to noon, with Megan Prelinger. Meet at trailhead. Volunteers with spotting scopes will accompany the walk.



Grace Ruth



The fall season had a strong start in spite of a chilly and overcast day on the first Saturday in September. Our large group was glad to be back in the garden, and we were rewarded with several first-of-season sightings.

A fall migrant **Yellow Warbler** was in the trees that circle the main lawn, then a chattering **Belted Kingfisher** flew high over our heads as we walked down toward the pond. On the lawn near the water the resident **Wild Turkey** was browsing in the grass, and not far away was a young **Great Blue Heron**. No surprise, given the success of this year's heron nesting season!

Other fall migrants were **Orange-crowned** and **Townsend's Warblers**, and a **Black-headed Grosbeak**. In September it's hard to know whether raptors we find are members of the local breeding community or among the abundant number of fall migrants. We found both an overflying **Red-tailed Hawk** and a **Red-shouldered Hawk** that perched where we all had good views of it.

Resident breeding **Song Sparrow** and **Dark-eyed Juncos** were abundant in all corners of the garden, as this year's young explore the world and practice their voices. Other resident species were **Black Phoebe**, **Chestnut-backed Chickadee**, and **Pygmy Nuthatch**.

The last leg of the walk was the most exciting, with the first-of-fall call of a **Pacific Wren**, and a pair of **Brown Creepers** in the Redwood Grove.

SF Botanical Garden  
September 7, 2019  
Compiled by  
Megan Prelinger  
30 Species:

Canada Goose - 2  
Mallard - 2  
Wild Turkey - 1  
Rock Pigeon - 2  
Anna's Hummingbird - 28  
Western Gull - 2  
California Gull - 1

Great Blue Heron - 1  
Red-shouldered Hawk - 1  
Red-tailed Hawk - 1  
Belted Kingfisher - 1  
Nuttall's Woodpecker - 1  
Black Phoebe - 5  
California Scrub-jay - 2  
American Crow - 3  
Common Raven - 7  
Chestnut-backed Chickadee - 20  
Barn Swallow - 1

Pygmy Nuthatch - 24  
Brown Creeper - 2  
Pacific Wren - 1  
American Robin - 1  
House Finch - 5  
Dark-eyed Junco - 24  
Song Sparrow - 18  
California Towhee - 6  
Orange-crowned Warbler - 1  
Yellow Warbler - 1  
Townsend's Warbler - 1  
Black-headed Grosbeak - 1



Grace Ruth



Bill Hummewell



Bill Hummewell

Top and above: Red-shouldered Hawk; Black-headed Grosbeak, middle row.





Jeff Harter shows the herons and hawks on the last Saturday in May.

## We Salute our Volunteers!

*Director's Note:* We are very grateful to the 27 dedicated adults and interns who volunteered multiple Saturdays to share their knowledge and expertise with the public:

Natasha Arnold, Kevin Biggerstaff, Kimiko Bouey, Claire Chow, Isabelle Chow, Kathleen Duffy, Martin Ernster, Anne Galjour, Missi Gavic, Jeff & Judy Harter, Bob Hirt, Alan Hopkins, Greg Lyon, Diane O'Donohue, Megan Prelinger, Sharon Pretti, Janel Schulenberg, Suellen Sleamaker, Kathleen Sullivan, Steve Wolford, Natasha Yankoffski, and Jennie Yoon.

Interns: Joy Chang, Ian McNamara, Jose and David Aguayo.



Judy Harter manages the info table on May 25th.



Sandi Wong



Greg Lyon shows the heron chicks on closing day, June 15th.



Sandi Wong

Above: Heron chicks left the nest in June.



## Volunteers, Watchers and Herons



Sandi Wong

Adult heron catches a fish at Stow Lake.



Alan Hopkins, center, leads the nature walk on May 25th.



Helene Sobol



SFNE

Left: Two herons in their nest just before fledging. Above: Suellen Sleamaker shows activity in the heron nests on 5/25.



SFNE

Field trip group led by Alan Hopkins spots Great Horned Owls on a walk around Stow Lake.





## Summer in the City Photos by Sandi Wong



Young Great Horned Owlets in June; Clark's Grebe with chick at Lake Merced; Marsh Wren; grebe chick swimming alone; Double-crested Cormorant with a fish at Stow Lake .