



The Blue Heron

News from San Francisco Nature Education · Summer 2023

Executive Director's Corner



Dear Friends,

Heron Watch opened on April 15th with hundreds of visitors on a bright sunny day! The folks at RPD (Recreation and Parks Dept.) worked hard with the contractor to ensure that the fence around the path (next to our Observation Site) would be taken down before we opened. Visitors enjoyed the newly paved path and lined up to see the adult herons in their nests as they traded places on the nest and turned the eggs. On April 29th, we discovered the first

chick in the nest in the dead tree by the Waterfall!

Please visit Heron Watch during May — [our flyer is attached](#). Family birding field trips continue for children 7–12 each Saturday from 10:15 – noon. Suggested donation for adults is \$15, children always free.

Our monthly Adult field trips (on the second Saturday) continue through June and restart in September. Maximum 10 participants, priority given to SFNE members. Information on signing up and payment is on our homepage under Birding Field Trips. Please visit [our calendar](#) for locations and find more information on page 3.

We are asking the RPD commission to rename Stow Lake as Blue Heron Lake. Unfortunately, Mr. Stow (Park Commissioner and member of CA Assembly) was a ferocious anti-Semite and we strongly believe it is time that the name be changed. Since Great Blue Herons have nested there for the past 30 years, we think it's more than appropriate to rename the Lake in honor of the Great Blue Herons who have brought so much joy to the visitors who watch them every year. Please write and express your support: Supervisor Myrna Melgar <melgarstaff@sfgov.org>

Our Spring Fundraising Campaign continues through June 15, 2023. For every dollar donated up to \$12,500, an anonymous donor will match! [Donate here](#). Our goal is to raise \$25,000 this season. Our tax ID number is 54-2111941. Please give generously via our secure online portal, Flipcause.

I look forward to seeing you at Stow Lake. Our next newsletter will appear in September.

Best regards,

Nancy

Nancy DeStefanis

[Become a Member](#) / [Donate Online](#)

Donate online or mail a check to: SFNE, PO Box 210303, SF CA 94121

www.sfnature.org

Tax ID no.: 54-2111941. Membership: Adults, \$35; Seniors 65+, \$30. Joint Membership for two seniors at same residence \$50; students 21 or under, \$25.

Email: info@sfnature.org tel.: 415-205-0776



New chicks at Island by the Boathouse

Ian Reid



Heron in waterfall nest

Ken Stampfer



Volunteers show the Herons to the public on Opening Day

Steve Wolford

On the pages ahead:

- 2 New Heron nest discovered, Heron Watch photos by Steve Wolford
- 3 SFBG field trip report
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New Heron Nest Spotted on Opening Day of Heron Watch!

By Nancy H. DeStefanis

Several hundred people came out to see the Great Blue Herons on opening day, April 15th. It was a beautiful sunny day and a perfectly clear day to view the herons.

While eyes were on the only Great Blue Heron Nest in the dead tree on the island by the Waterfall, volunteers spotted a Great Blue Heron fly into a new nest in the healthy tree next door! RPD has been paving the path around Stow Lake for three months which obscured our view of the tiny island with two trees. On Opening Day, with the fence down, we could clearly see the activities in both trees.

Our volunteers used their spotting scopes to show children and adults the heron sitting on the nest as well as the other adult herons who made reported trips to the nest with large branches. The female would stand up and take the branch and place it in the nest and then sit back down on the eggs. After a few stick deliveries, the herons mated. Later, the male returned and they changed places on the nest, so the female could forage for fish and gophers. We also watched the heron stand up several times and turn the eggs with its beak.

So far, we have three Great Blue Heron nests — one at the island by the Boathouse (where they nested from 1993 - 2015, returned in 2022 and back again in 2023.) The second nest in the now dead tree where they nested from 2015 to present, and a third nest (first ever) in the healthy tree behind the dead tree!

Heron Watch continues on Saturdays through May 20th from 10 AM to 1 PM. Please spread the word that chicks are expected any day in both nests on the tiny island. Find the Heron Watch flyer [here](#).

New Heron Nest!



raphaelxox.com



raphaelxox.com



Volunteer, Isabelle Chow, answers questions



Youngster with his new SF Nature Ed field journal

Steve Wolford, SFNE

Steve Wolford, SFNE



Heron Watch volunteers on Opening Day. Left to right: David Sullivan, SFNE photographer, Claire Hunter, Isabelle Chow, Nancy DeStefanis, and Steve Wolford

Susan Freinkel

San Francisco Botanical Garden report April 8, 2023

By Alan Hopkins



We were greeted by **Pygmy Nuthatches** and **Canada Geese** as we gathered at the Botanical Garden's main gate. The sky was overcast but there was no wind and so it was altogether very pleasant. We headed to my favorite weedy corner at the southeast of the Temperate Asian Garden where there had been a bounty of berries for birds earlier but the berries had been picked clean. I had hoped that the White-throated Sparrows would still be around the Dwarf Conifer Pond but they had moved on too. We had much better luck at the Bamboo Pond where we found a good indicator of migration with at least three **Wilson's Warblers** and a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**. The California Native Garden was quiet and made me cast my mind back when we would have been looking at Quail protecting their tiny chicks. At the Succulent Garden we found a host of photographers waiting for nuthatches and woodpeckers to visit the nest holes in the agave stalks. Tree Swallows circled high overhead while a **Pacific Wren** zipped by too quickly to watch. Some for the Eucalyptus tree bordering the garden had blown down taking a swatch of succulents with them. Miraculously the tree with the **Red-shouldered Hawk** nest remained and one of the hawks called from a nearby pine. On the way into the Children's Garden we'd passed a few birders on their way out who mentioned having seen the rare-ish Orchard Oriole. Some of us spent a bit of time looking for the oriole among the garden's salvias. If we had spend the whole afternoon we could have found the oriole, but the ho-hum expression on the rest of the team let us know it wasn't worth the effort. At the small pond a male **Mallard** snoozed and seemed unbothered by the group of birders watching a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, **Townsend's Warbler** and **Yellow-rumped Warblers**. On our return we had nice looks at a **Downy Woodpecker** we heard a **Hooded Oriole** and studied a one-year old **Double Crested Cormorant** with a whole throat and chest. It was a day with blooming magnolias and we tallied 42 species — not bad!



Heron resting on Strawberry Island

Richard W. Drake



Pygmy Nuthatch

Grace Ruth



Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Grace Ruth

May 13th Field Trip Adult Birding in Golden Gate Park

Trip Leader: Alan Hopkins

9:30 AM - Noon

Current members: \$10, Non-members: \$15

Maximum 10 participants. Location emailed 3 days prior to the first 10 enrolled participants

Sign up in advance at info@sfnature.org

Prepay on Flipcause at www.sfnature.org



Helene Sobol

Support our Heron Watch fundraising campaign!

Our Spring fundraising campaign begins on March 1st and ends on June 15th, 2023. Please help us to reach our goal by giving generously — \$5,000, \$2,500, \$1,000, \$500, or whatever you can donate now. We have a \$12,500 matching grant from an anonymous donor. Our goal is to raise \$25,000 this season. Our tax ID number is 54-2111941

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

Spring at Stow Lake!



Canada Goose with goslings

raphaelkox.com



Red-tail Hawk

David Sullivan



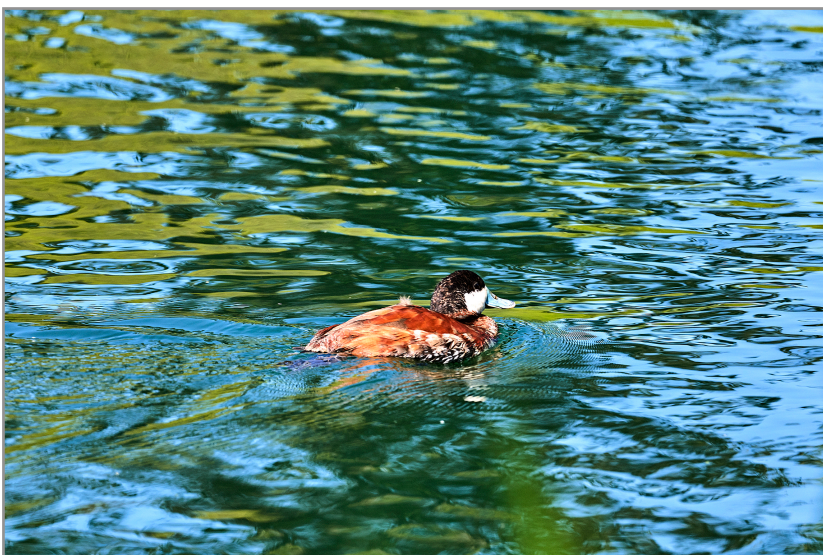
Black-crowned Night Heron

Richard W. Drake



Wood Ducks

Ian Reid



Ruddy Duck in breeding plumage

David Sullivan



Red-shouldered Hawks mating

Ian Reid