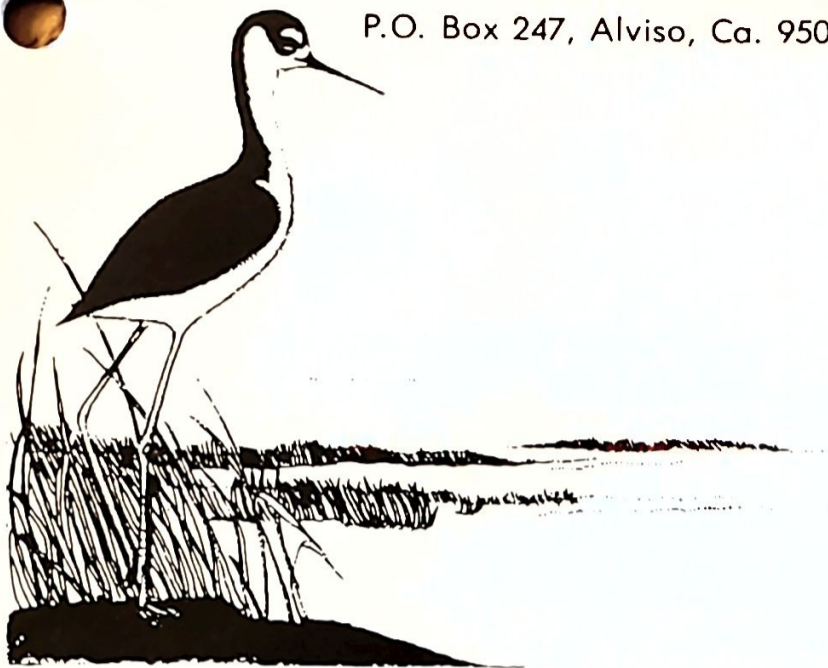


SAN FRANCISCO BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 247, Alviso, Ca. 95002 • (408) 946-6548

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NUMBER 14

SEPTEMBER 1985

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR JAPANESE GARDEN TOUR

Some of our members may remember the tour of Kotani-En Gardens in October of 1984 as a benefit for the Observatory. Those of you who missed it, or would like to do it again, will have your opportunity on Sunday, October 27.

We'll tell you a little more about Kotani-En in our next newsletter, but suffice it to say that it is considered to be the finest example of Japanese architecture and landscaping in the region. Started in 1918, a small band of 11 Japanese craftsmen spent 10 years "handcrafting" the estate using tools and methods dating back to the 13th century. Some of the plants are very old (300+ years) and along with those spectacular Koi were gifts of the Emperor of Japan.



We do need some help with this affair, however, both people and transportation. Kotani-En is in Saratoga near the intersection of Austin Way & Bainter (that's off Saratoga-Los Gatos Rd.) but we do need some vans or station wagons to shuttle people from the parking area to the estate. Kotani-En Foundation will train our own docents for tours of the shrine and grounds and of course

there are all sorts of other little jobs connected with an event like this, so we also need people! Remember the date: **Sunday, October 27**, from about **9am-3pm**. (Rain-check date is November 3rd.) It should be a charming way to spend a Sunday and your help will "benefit" the Observatory (pun intended) in its ongoing programs. If you have the time just give SFBBO a call at (408) 946-6548.

Dave Nauer

WATERFOWL BOTULISM STUDY

Avian botulism has long been recognized as a significant cause of waterfowl mortality in North America and over the years has been responsible for millions of waterfowl deaths. In California annual losses vary substantially, but can amount to 250,000 at locations where large numbers of waterfowl overwinter. Years of high rainfall and subsequent flood waters that persist into the warm season have always produced increased botulism. What are the conditions for botulism growth? The basics are simple - warm temperature, animal protein food supply and high moisture content or water. These conditions are frequently found in marshes during the warm summer or fall weather.

Various waterfowl monitoring programs conducted by the California Department of Fish and Game from 1974 to 1976 have demonstrated the occurrence of avian botulism in the south San Francisco Bay. Further studies by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Department of Fish and Game and the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board have indicated that the

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disease has been prevalent in the Artesian Slough area near Alviso. This slough receives a constant supply of treated waste water from the San Jose/Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Facility.

As part of a long-term biological monitoring program, the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory was sub-contracted by the California Department of Fish and Game to assess the effects of waste water disposal on the occurrence of avian botulism in Artesian Slough.

Field work in the Artesian Slough - Coyote Creek study area began on June 14 and by the end of June there was a mild outbreak of avian botulism. Through August 4, 29 live and 144 dead vertebrates have been collected. The dead vertebrates included 53 fish, 2 mammals, and 89 birds. The live vertebrates included ducks and gulls.

Survey trips of Artesian Slough and a portion of Coyote Creek are made twice a week by Bird Observatory volunteers. During each survey trip, water quality measurements and benthic mud samples are taken from five specific sites. Sick and dead vertebrates are collected to help prevent the spread of the disease. The sick birds are treated by Wildlife Rescue and later released.

The study runs through mid-October and survey trips have been scheduled (see below) If you are interested in the project and would like to volunteer for one of the 3-4 hour boat trips into Artesian Slough or help with the lab work which involves identifying the invertebrates and testing samples for toxicity, please call the Bird Observatory and sign up. Training will be provided for all aspects of this project.

BOTULISM SURVEY TRIPS - Tentative dates

August 18	Sunday	12:00 pm
August 22	Thursday	1:30 pm
August 25	Sunday	8:00 am
August 28	Wednesday	10:00 am
August 31	Saturday	11:30 am
September 3	Tuesday	12:30 pm
September 7	Saturday	1:00 pm
September 11	Wednesday	9:00 am
September 15	Sunday	11:00 am
September 18	Wednesday	1:00 am
September 22	Sunday	8:00 am
September 26	Thursday	9:00 am
September 29	Sunday	11:00 am
October 2	Wednesday	11:00 am
October 6	Sunday	11:00 am
October 10	Thursday	8:00 am
October 12	Saturday	8:30 am
October 15	Tuesday	10:00 am

VOLUNTEERS. . A special thanks goes out to Barbara Cox, Yalarie Layne, Suzanne Moore, Ed & Sarah Roberts and Jean Young for the volunteering their time to help out in the office.

I hadn't been to Texas in five years, so I was anxious to get underway. This was our first attempt at a long distance tour. A total of nine people signed up for the trip; however a few could only attend a portion of the trip.

Our arrival in Houston on Saturday afternoon was about as "inauspicious" as you can get; the rain was steady, all day, all night. To make things worse, our rental van balked (water in the gas?), but I was able to clear that up. Our first camp was Deussen City Park just north of Houston and we were lucky because they had shelters - for our tents! Though there were few birds out in the rain, we did get Yellow-crowned Night Herons. That night we were awakened by the barking and hooting of Barred Owls. We saw shapes, but didn't really get a good look until later on. The next day started overcast, but did get sunny. Woodpeckers! We got Red-headed, Pileated, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers; if that's not enough how about Eastern Wood Pewee, Black Vulture, Pine Warbler, and others.

We then headed east to Galveston and stayed in that area for a couple of days. We did that fabulous birding area justice: woods, mud flats, marshland, beaches, and farmlands. High Island, Anahuac NWR, Galveston Island, Bolivar Flats were loaded with gulls, terns, egrets, plovers and peeps. Oh, did I tell you about the night all our tents got blown down? And rain, more rain, complete with white snow. Maybe I should keep quiet about that part: bad advertising. Not only was the birding great, but I treated myself to a great Red Snapper Pontch artrain in a Galveston restaurant. By the way, Anahuac was especially good for rails; great looks at both Black and Yellow Rails.

Moving down into the Lower Rio Grande Valley ("the valley"), we spent most of our time using Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park as our home base. A great place for chiggers; I'm still scratching. We did get most of the specialties of the area: Brown and Green Jays, Audubon's and Altamira Oriole, Olive Sparrows, and of course the not so rare and elusive Chachalaca. This area reminds me of Mexico and the other people feel the same way. Much of South Texas has been cleared for agriculture, so this area is a real island of sub-tropical scrub in a desert of citrus groves.

Our next stop was Edward's Plateau and Lost Maples State Park. Simply a beautiful area where I wouldn't mind having a summer home (there's no work in the area); come to think of it I wouldn't mind having a summer home - period. Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo were the two "target birds" of this area, but to me they took a back seat to the clear streams, rolling hills,

and the overall beauty of the area. Ask anyone who has been there. Did I tell you about the weather we ran into here? No? The Ranger came by and told us to take down our tents and take cover. Need I say more? The storm never did hit, but I got to meet some great folks all juddled together in the Men's room. All in all it was a great place.

And now for the highlights. We stayed at a state park near Houston, so we could get to Atwater NWR early in the morning to see the Greater Prairie Chickens booming. We did! We also got Sprague's Pipit (late), White-tailed Hawk, Caracara, and King Rail. Wayne Shiflett (the Refuge manager) was kind enough to get us on private property near Eagle Lake to see Purple Gallinules and all kinds of Egrets on the breeding grounds. But those weren't the highlights -- the alligators were! Biggest things I've ever seen. Now I know how Captain Hook felt. The place was straight out of Disney world, but real. Just great!

Well, Let's recap. We saw about 275 birds. One in our group got 110 new birds! Even I got four new ones. Can't complain. It's tough at the top! All in all a great trip. I'm really looking forward to next year when we do Big Bend and West Texas. Anyone need a Colima Warbler?

Don Starks

SFBBO BOARD ELECTION 1985-86

The September 5th General Membership meeting is the time for members of SFBBO to elect three Directors to serve on the Board for a three year term. The nominating committee will offer the following slate of directors for your voting approval. Write-in candidates from the floor will be welcomed at that time. Come and vote while enjoying an interesting program on the history of Alviso.

Jean Dubois - SFBBO Director since 1983. Served as President of the Board 1983-84. He is presently serving as treasurer, and has worked on several committees. Jean has a Wildlife Management degree and has worked for the Bureau of Land Management.

Phyllis Browning - A birder for over 20 years and has been active as a docent at the Palo Alto Baylands. She is a member/volunteer for SFBBO working on the Palo Alto Airport Study, Colonial Breeding Bird Survey and the Yellowthroat project. Phyllis has a degree in Biological Science and has been in the Science Information field for over 25 years.

Lou Young - A longtime birder with a particular concern for the ecology of the South Bay. Member/volunteer for SFBBO working on the Botulism Study, Palo Alto Airport Study, Bair Island, and served on various committees. Lou is a Systems Engineering Manager at Lockheed.

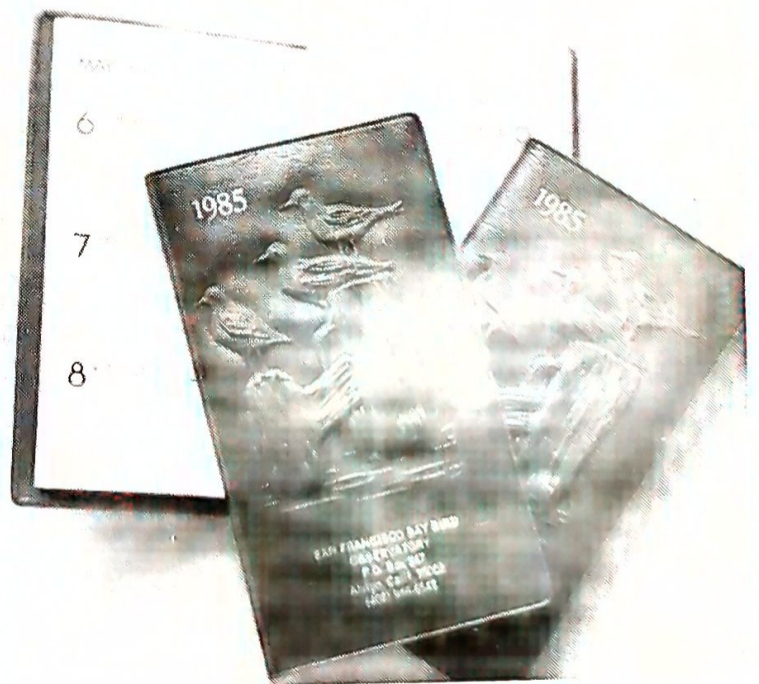
BAYLANDS PHOTO EXHIBITION

The Baylands Photographic Exhibition is sponsored by the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, Peninsula Conservation Center Foundation, Tri-City Ecology Center, Ohlone Audubon Society, Baylands Conservation Committee, and the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory to provide increased understanding and awareness of the San Francisco Bay Wetlands.

Subject matter is restricted to the land, marshes, sloughs, waterways, and shallows of and surrounding San Francisco Bay south of the San Mateo Bridge. Photographs depicting wildlife, plants and natural features of these areas, as well as photographs depicting the relationship of people to these areas are sought. Black and white prints and color prints are the only media accepted; no slides please.

The competition is open to everyone. Prizes will be awarded. Entries are due Friday, October 4. Judging will be on October 17, 1985. Winning photographs will be on exhibit at Yalco Fashion Park, November 1 to 4, 1985, and at the S. F. Bay National Wildlife Refuge from February through May 1986.

For entry forms, posters and further information, please contact the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society at (415) 329-1811, the Peninsula Conservation Center at (415) 328-5313, or the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory at (408) 946-6548. Drop-off points for entries include: Peninsula Conservation Center, Palo Alto; S. F. Bay Bird Observatory, Alviso; Tri-City Ecology Center, Fremont; and the following Brooks Camera Stores; Fremont, Eastridge, Pruneyard, and Hillsdale.



Now on sale at the Bird Observatory office, 1985 SFBBO pocket appointment calendars. A bargain at \$3 each. Stop by and pick up one . . . or two . . . or three. Great gifts!

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Thursday, September 5, 1985

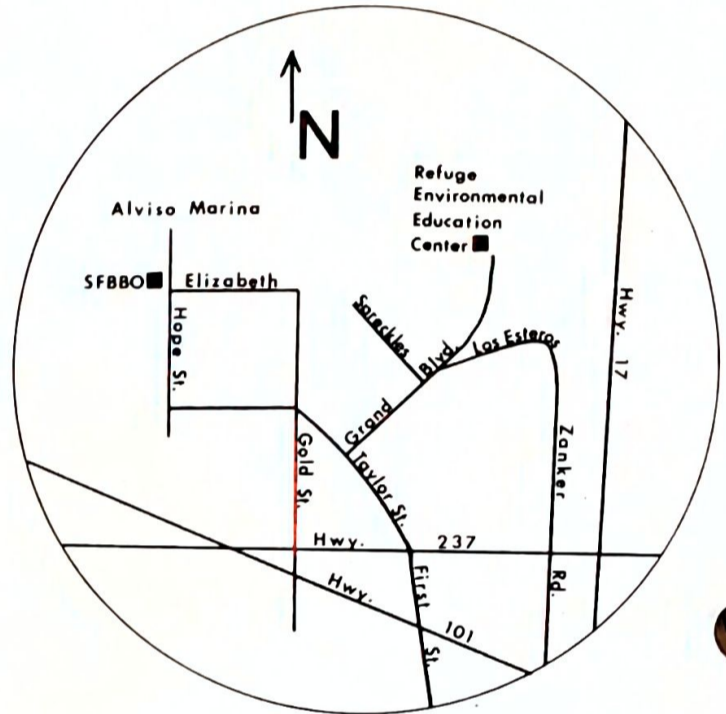
Refuge Environmental Education Center
in Alviso

7:30 pm

FEATURED SPEAKER: Bruce MacGregor
will talk about the history of Alviso.

The Bird Observatory office is located at 1290 Hope St. in Alviso. The office is open from 1-5 pm weekdays and some weekends. But before stopping in, call (408) 946-6548 and check the schedule.

The General Membership meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm at the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Environmental Education Center in Alviso. (see map below). The Board meetings are open to the membership and are held monthly. Call the Observatory for dates and times.



DONATIONS. . . . Thanks to Phyllis Swanson, Alice Hoch and Michealle Havenhill for the refreshments for the July General Membership meeting. Also thanks to Belen Palmer for donations to the Botulism Study, Golden Gate Audubon Society for journals, and Aileen Brodsky for filing cabinets.




Editor Susie Formenti

Assistant Editor, Dave Nauer

The newsletter deadline is the first Monday of the month. Send contributions to the editor: Susie Formenti, 16675 Buckskin Ct., Morgan Hill, Ca. 95037.

The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory is a non-profit corporation under IRS statute 501(c)3. All memberships and contributions are tax deductible.



P.O. Box 247
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Student/Senior	\$10
Regular	\$15
Family	\$20
Associate	\$50
Contributing	\$100
Sustaining	\$200
Life	\$400 *
Patron	\$2000 *
Corporation	\$500 +

Make checks payable to SFBBO. Your gift membership is tax deductible.

* Single payment becomes part of an endowment fund