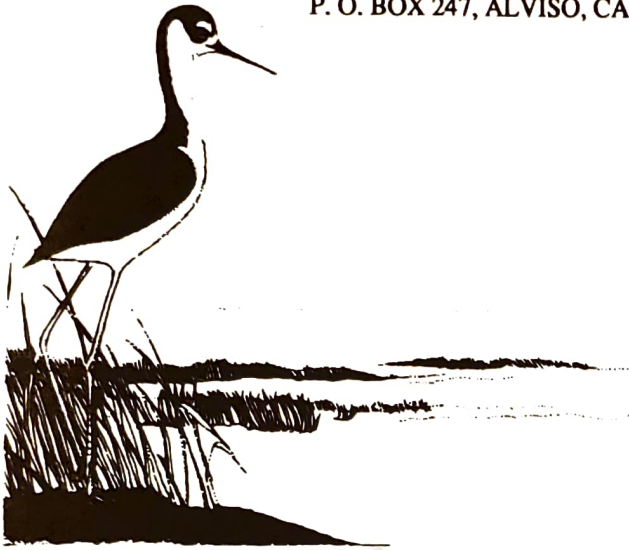


# San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory Newsletter

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September/October 1991

## New Staff Biologist

by Don Starks

As of June 24, 1991 The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory has a biologist. Dianne Kopec is a name you should all be aware of since she wrote an article in a recent issue of our newsletter concerning her research on the Harbor Seals of San Francisco Bay. Her expertise in field research as well as her contacts throughout the bay area will help the Bird Observatory initiate new projects as well as complete those in progress.

Field biology has been Dianne Kopec's primary interest since she was an undergraduate at the University of Iowa. After receiving a B.A. in Zoology in 1978 she worked in Costa Rica on a study of foraging strategies in leaf-cutter ants. After returning to the States she moved to Florida to work for the EPA on an offshore research platform, examining the effects of oil drilling discharges on coral reef communities. From there she moved to Oregon, again to work for the EPA, this time on heavy metal contamination of freshwater streams. In the early eighties she moved to the Bay Area to attend graduate school at USF, where she received a MS in Environmental Studies. While in school she worked for a number of different environmental organizations, providing background research and reports on issues related to surface water pollution. In the late eighties she began researching and fundraising for a study of toxic pollutant levels, health and population dynamics of harbor seals inhabiting San Francisco Bay. That study is ongoing and will run concurrently with her work at SFBBO. ■

## A View of the Bay

by Dianne Kopec

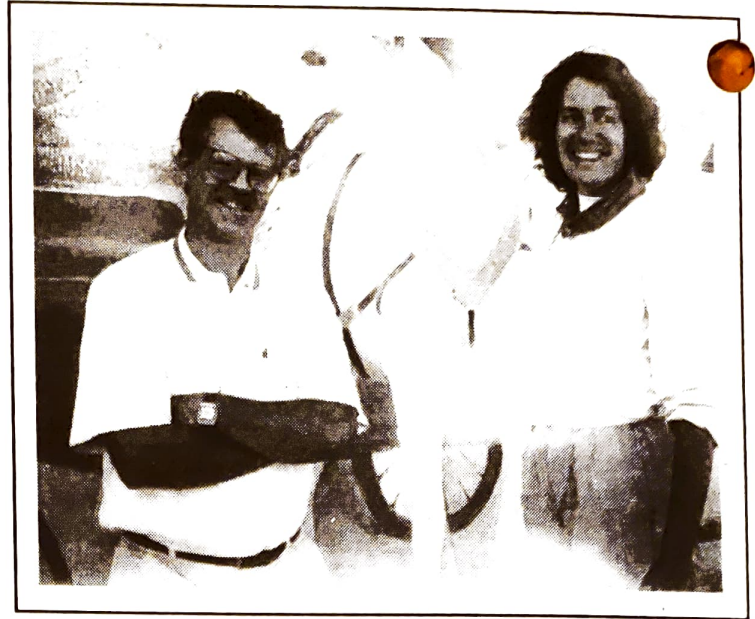
My first month as staff biologist at SFBBO brings continued amazement at the tenacity of San Francisco Bay wildlife. Amid all the levees and riprap, water diversions and wastewater discharges, wild areas still exist. Through my ongoing work with the bay's harbor seals I know of several rookeries and haul-out sites hidden down an obscure slough or tucked behind an eroding levee. At some sites these wild places have survived the last several hundred years of development with their essential features intact. Incredible. Other sites, such as Bair Island, have been radically altered for development, abandoned and portions allowed to return to natural marsh and upland. Even more incredible. These areas; made natural by the wildlife which inhabit them, provide a bridge to the bay's past and to its future.

Now, with Peg Woodin as my guide, we have been exploring more wild areas, made so by migratory waterfowl, foraging shorebirds and colonial nesters. Many of you are already familiar with these sites, which will be the primary focus of my work at SFBBO. Through this summer and fall much of my time will be spent on the botulism and wildlife surveys at Artesian Slough and Guadalupe Slough. This fieldwork is balanced, as always, with data analysis. The scores of volunteer biologists at SFBBO have generated volumes of data on South Bay wildlife and part of my responsibilities include evaluating and organizing this data for publication. First on the list is a summary report on the

Continued on page 2

status of colonial nesters south of the San Mateo Bridge. Next is an examination of the wildlife surveys at Artesian Slough, ongoing since 1981, focusing on trends in species diversity of numbers. Analysis of the waterfowl and shorebird observations at the Knapp will be enhanced with surveys of physical factors, including depth, salinity, etc., at the site.

SFBBO's work is extremely important to the continued survival of the bay's wild areas. If drops in survivorship go unnoticed or reproductive failures are not identified, population declines will not be recorded until the majority of the population, and perhaps a significant portion of the genetic diversity, is lost. Effective environmental policy depends on solid biological information. There's much to do, and I look forward to meeting and working with you folks out in the field. ■



Don Starks, Executive Director (left) and Dianne Kopec, Biologist

### FALL CLASSES FOR BIRDERS

SFBBO still has room in the following classes remaining for this year. New classes in the works for next year are snakes and lizards of the bay area, a beginning birdwatching course, and hawk identification which will be taught by Allen Fish, director of the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory.

<u>Class Title</u>	<u>Instructor</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Fee</u>
Shorebird Identification	Don Starks	Aug 14	\$50 members \$65 non members
Duck Identification	Paul Noble	Nov 6	\$30 members \$45 non members

Two other classes for persons interested in learning more about birds and sharpening their identification skills, will be offered by Sequoia Adult School. The classes will be taught by Maryann Danielson, biologist, tour leader and bird photographer. For further information, call (415) 369-6809.

**BIRDING BASICS** — For beginning and intermediate birders. The fall quarter of this lecture/field trip series will concentrate on basic avian biology and identification and natural history of our fall waterbirds. Ten slide lectures, starting Wednesday, September 11 will be held at the San Carlos Senior Center at 601 Chestnut Ave., San Carlos.

**FOLLOWING BIRDS THROUGH THE FALL SEASON** — for intermediate and more advanced birders. Major bird groups to be found in Northern California during the autumn months will highlight this fall lecture/field trip series. The identification and natural history of lingering summer birds and returning shorebirds, warblers, seabirds and waterfowl will be covered. Ten slide lectures, starting on September 9, will be held at Little House, 800 Middle Ave., Menlo Park.

Register at the first class. Fee for both classes: \$25 (lecture only). Field trips will be arranged with an additional fee.

## Waterfowlers Association Benefit A Success

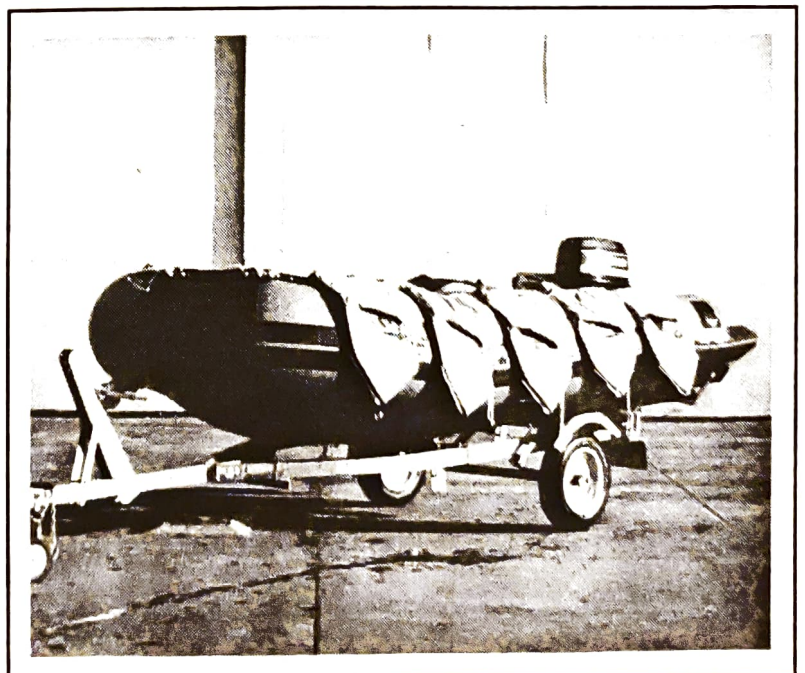
The luncheon held on June 8th by the San Pablo Bay Waterfowlers Association was a big hit and a financial success for the Bird Observatory. Events such as this don't just happen like a flower blooming in the spring. Without the efforts, time, and money of many people fundraisers just don't happen. A few names rise to the top: Tom Espersen, Rich Radigonda, and Tommy Prather. These three were instrumental in organizing this affair. The Board of Directors of SFBBO were also at the forefront with donations as well as the procurement of items for the auction. The purpose of this fundraiser, which netted over \$5,000, was to pay for the new boat, trailer and motor.

You've heard me talk about cooperation between and among diverse groups. In past years we've cooperated with the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory to sponsor the annual scope show. (Which will be held again this year at Fort Mason on October 27) Now this effort with duck hunters. Without the generosity of the this group the Bird Observatory would still owe a sizable sum of money on the boat, motor and trailer which cost a little over \$6,000. This group came through and reached in their collective pockets to help us accomplish our goal and we hope we can repay their kindness and generosity.

The following list contains the names of individuals and companies who donated either items or cash to purchase items for the auction and raffle. The Bird Observatory greatly thanks them for their generosity.

Mel and Patricia McKean  
 Julia M. Ratto  
 Douglas and Nancy Bartman  
 Helaine Stayner  
 Michael and Jeanne Egan  
 Michael and Diane Corker  
 Gerald Shedden  
 Wetland Const.  
 Allen and Donna Jean Thomas  
 Art Bond  
 Western Wildlife Gallery  
 Wild Bryde  
 Richard Cox  
 California Waterfowl Assoc.  
 Tim Egan  
 Lee Lehman  
 Carlo Vecchinnelli  
 Bill Brush  
 TRI Realtors  
 Chuck Morehouse  
 Emery Mitchell  
 Thrasher's Frames  
 Robert Steiner  
 Bob Wilson  
 Tommy Prather  
 Tommy's Bar and Grill  
 Rich Radigonda  
 Rich's Auto & Truck Repair  
 Ron Automotive  
 Jim Waters  
 Petar's Restaurant  
 David Morris  
 Little Hill Enterprise  
 Dr. Walter Brooks

Frank Johnson  
 Harry and Betty Adamson  
 Tod Bales  
 B & B Paving Co.  
 Steve Lawrence  
 Walnut Creek Meat Co  
 Tim Carey  
 Hogan's Sport Shop  
 Rick Vandiver



*New Yukon inflatable boat, trailer and motor*

# The Survival of the California Clapper Rail

by Tom Espersen

United States Fish and Wildlife Service personnel at the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge have been alarmed for several years at the precipitous decline of the California clapper rail (*Rallus longirostris*) (U.S. Endangered Species List since 1970) on San Francisco Bay. In an effort to help save our few, remaining rails, the USF&WS published a "Draft Predator Management Plan and Environmental Assessment" in July of 1990. In April 1991, the completed "Predator Management Plan and Final Environmental Assessment" was published; it became final on 02 May 1991.

Although there are many factors that bear on the decline of the clapper rail, this article deals with only one: the red fox.

In order to protect endangered species, strong action can and must be taken. The Endangered Species Act mandates such actions. Recently, at the Alameda Naval Air Station, adult burrowing owls (a species of special concern themselves) which were preying on least tern chicks were shot. The National Sierra Club makes provisions in its club policies so that "every effort must be made to prevent any population from becoming threatened or endangered in all or any significant part of its range, and to return to optimum population size those species that are currently threatened, endangered, or in unnatural decline."

There were two different camps at odds here: the Sierra Club Wildlife contingent which was only willing to see the rail helped in limited ways and the Sierra Club Wetlands people who knew strong action had to be taken now.

cuddly. Pictures of red foxes and their cubs abound in magazines, newspapers, fine art prints and lithographs. Thousands of people every day see red foxes. They are found in Europe and every state except Hawaii. Red foxes are not threatened, endangered, or in unnatural decline in any part of their range.

California clapper rails on the other hand, are on their way to extinction. Less than 500 (most likely less than 400) survive in the salt marshes of San Francisco Bay. They are found no where else in the world. Few people ever see clapper rails. You do not find works of art or clothing depicting clapper rails.

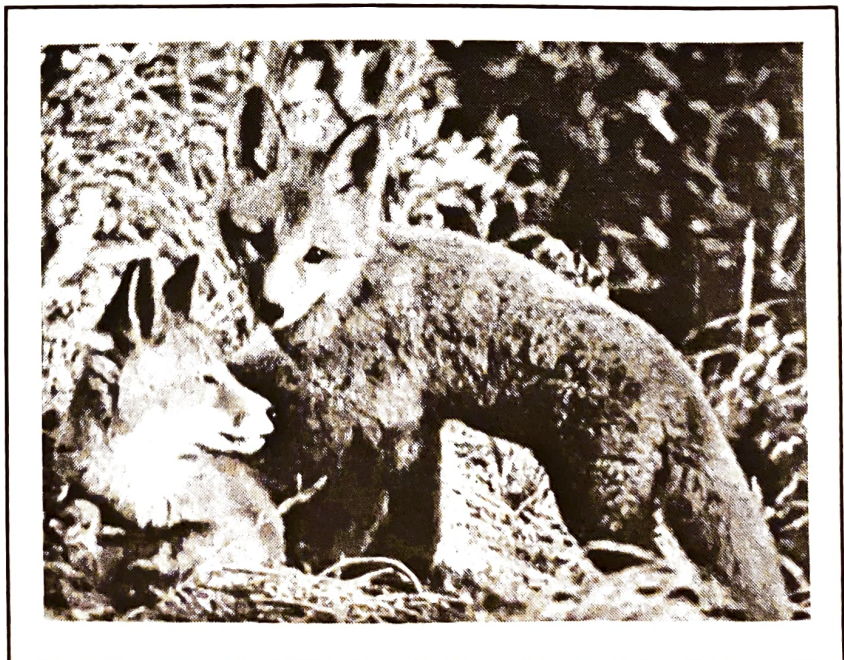
On Saturday, 27 April 1991, I attended a meeting at the San Francisco Bay Chapter of Sierra Club office in Oakland to negotiate the Sierra Club position regarding the Predator Management Plan. Representatives from both the Bay Chapter and the Loma Prieta Chapter of Sierra

Club attended because the issue crossed chapter boundaries. Four ways of dealing with the red fox problem were at issue. The four ways are:

1. Calling and shooting
2. Live trapping and euthanasia
3. Leg hold traps
4. Denning

Both sides easily agreed on 1 and 2 because they are "selective" in nature. You know you are shooting a red fox if you can see it and you likewise know if you have caught a red fox in a live trap.

The Sierra Club Wildlife representatives opposed 3 and 4 because they are "not selective" in nature. Leg hold traps can trap other mammals and birds. Denning involves putting a fumigant down a den. You can't be sure you will always trap a fox in a leg hold trap or have found a fox den. Since we had to have unanimity in our position paper, we endorsed 1 and 2, while



Red foxes are furry, cute and

remaining silent on 3 and 4.

On Sunday, 28 April 1991, a survey team comprised of Peg Wooden, Kristie Nelson and Tom Espersen of SFBBO and Roger Hothem of the USF&WS was on Bair Island to do a census of the nesting Great Blue Herons, Snowy Egrets, Great Egrets and Black Crowned Night Herons. During this visit to Bair, we saw a red fox on the island. Needless to say, Bair did not look like I had seen it so many times before. The rookery was in a shambles. The Great Blue Herons had abandoned Bair Island for the safety of the high tension power line towers on both the north and south sides of Bair.

The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) is dragging their feet in helping the clapper rail. A meeting with Mr. Carl Wilcox of DFG regarding the red fox problem was originally set for July 2 in Yountville. The meeting was cancelled and then scheduled for July 29 in Yountville.

What you can do to help save the rail is to write to Governor Pete Wilson and ask that he make DFG take action against the red fox. DFG is already required to, but they are ignoring their duty and we are letting them get away with it. DFG was funded \$45,000 of US Fish and Wildlife Service money to do predator control and they have yet to start.

*Tom Espersen is the Wetlands Chairperson for the Loma Prieta chapter of the Sierra Club and a Director on the SFBBO Board.*

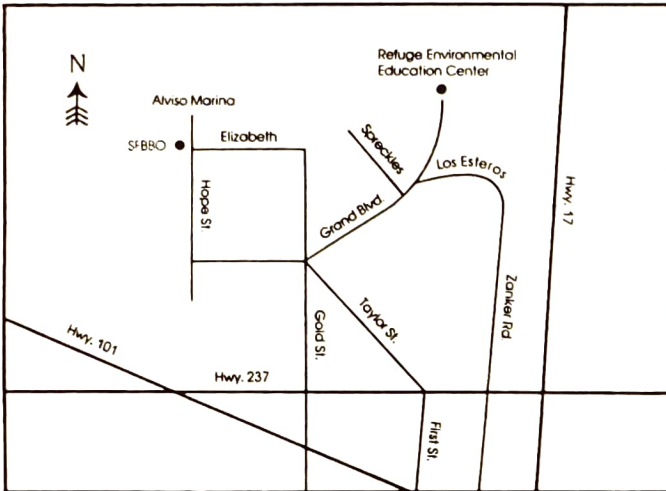


The Bird Observatory is located at 1290 Hope St. in Alviso. The office is open from 1-5 pm weekdays and some weekends. But before stopping in, call (408) 946-6548 and check the schedule.

The General Membership meetings are held biannually. The Board meetings are open to the membership and are held monthly. Call the Observatory office for dates and times.

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

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



## DECOY SHOW

Sunday, August 25  
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Sponsored by the San Pablo Bay Waterfowlers

**Tommy's Bar & Grill**  
2400 San Pable Ave.  
Pinole, CA

For more information call Tommy Prather  
(415) 724-0341

## Knapp Study

Survey trips for the Knapp Study are continuing every other Sunday starting at 8:00 a.m. Listed below are dates scheduled through the month of July 1991. Your help is needed, no matter what your level of experience. If you are interested in this study, contact the Bird Observatory office at (408) 946-6548.

Sunday	Sept 1
Sunday	Sept 15
Sunday	Sept 29
Sunday	Oct 13
Sunday	Oct 27
Sunday	Nov 10
Sunday	Nov 24
Sunday	Dec 8

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**Biologist**  
Diane Kopeck

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### San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

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I would like to join  Renew my membership   
in the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Student/Senior	\$10
Regular	\$15
Family	\$20
Associate	\$50
Contributing	\$100
Sustaining	\$200
Life	\$400 *
Patron	\$2000 *
Corporation	\$500 *

\* Single payment becomes part of an endowment fund.



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

SAN FRANCISCO BAY  
BIRD OBSERVATORY



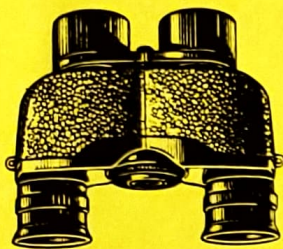
San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory &  
Golden Gate Raptor Observatory  
present



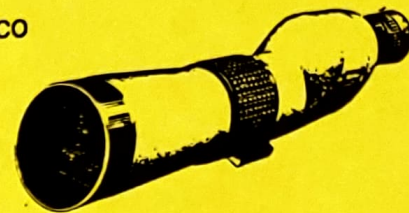
# 2nd ANNUAL SCOPE AND BINOCULAR SHOW

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 10-4 p.m.

Bldg. F (Firehouse), Fort Mason, San Francisco



\$3 Admission  
Ample parking available



Come see, handle and purchase the latest in spotting scopes and binoculars from top manufacturers such as:

**Swarovski**  
**Orion**  
**Leupold**  
**Bushnell**

**Leitz**  
**Nikon**  
**Bogen**  
**Steiner**

**Swift**  
**Kowa**  
**Optolyth**  
**And many more**

**Celestron**  
**Aus Jena**  
**Zeiss**

- Lectures and slide presentations on Bird Identification: Hawks, Gulls, Shorebirds
- Demonstrations on care of optics
- Door Prizes
- Lectures on choosing binoculars and scopes
- Outdoor test patterns for comparing the latest and best in sport optics

## Lecture Schedule

11:00 - 12:00 Gull Identification  
 12:00 - 1:00 Lecture on Use and Selection of Optics  
 1:00 - 2:00 Shorebird Identification  
 2:00 - 3:00 Hawk Identification



Thanks to  **Lockheed**  
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