

San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory Newsletter

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SFBBO Welcomes New Director

As I write this I have been on the job for about three weeks as SFBBO Director. It is too early for me to lay out a new agenda, but I have many ideas for moving forward in the areas of conservation research and education. I will at least tell you where I came from. I am a recent graduate of Duke University—MS degree in Natural Resource Ecology. I have worked as a teacher, researcher, and writer in the environmental field since 1986 in government, private industry, and non-profit organizations. Recently I have spent a good deal of time at the Manomet Bird Observatory (the east coast counterpart of Point Reyes Bird Observatory), where I was a summer intern and later a research associate during my thesis project.

As far as birds go, shorebirds (as in sandpipers and plovers) have been my chief interest. For two field seasons I worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in northern Alaska on shorebird projects; my

thesis research was on shorebird staging areas on the Massachusetts coast; I have also dabbled with shorebirds on the North and South Carolina coasts.

Just a few days ago I was walking along the levee of the Alviso Slough trail at dusk. A cascading buzz of bird calls alerted me to the presence of a group of several hundred western sandpipers roosting on some small islands behind the levee. The usually quiet roosting shorebirds were excited about something. Across the bay the sun had just set into an orange afterglow across the hills. The time seemed right for making the big jump north towards arctic breeding grounds. (Migrating flocks of shorebirds and landbirds tend to leave towards sunset, possibly using the setting sun as a direction finder.) The next day most of the shorebirds were gone.

The South Bay is an exciting area for shorebirds. In Spring of 1990 San

Francisco Bay was designated a "Hemispheric Site" by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN). This designation is awarded to a handful of sites in the world that provide crucial habitat for shorebirds. The SF Bay supports around 700,000 western sandpipers and 350,000 other shorebirds during migration. The immense size of the Bay and difficulty of access and travel make shorebird studies difficult. I am looking for a manageable shorebird project and may start some work later this summer with migrating phalaropes in the salt ponds. Around 40,000 Wilson's phalaropes have been reported in salt ponds around the Bay. The brine shrimp that flourish in salt ponds are probably what brings in these swimming shorebirds. I hope to have more news about this project and others in the next newsletter.

Charles Pfister
SFBBO Director

Binoculars

The observatory could use some good binoculars to be able to lend out to volunteers and students taking classes. We are also taking binocular donations and field guide donations for the Birder's Forum to be delivered to South American scientists and educators for bird conservation.

Most "North American" migratory birds spend half of their lives in the neotropics, a region experiencing high rates of deforestation and other environmental pressures. Efforts to preserve these species must be international, yet a lack of binoculars and other basic research equipment is frustrating the efforts of Latin American research and conservation groups. Without proper equipment, these groups cannot identify and protect habitats crucial to resident and migrant birds, and educate the public about conservation issues.

The Birder's Forum is a network of North American birders, bird clubs, and environmental organizations that contribute new and used binoculars, spotting scopes, 35mm cameras, bird guides, field equipment and other items to aid research, conservation, and education efforts in the neotropics.

If you would like to donate equipment to the bird observatory or the Birder's Forum please call the office and we will see that all donations are put to good use.

Wish List

The observatory is in need of a VCR and TV that can be used for the classroom. If you have one in good condition that you would like to donate, please call the office.

A couple of mountain bikes for the bird surveys to allow travel on the levees.

GTE Gives Money for the Birds

GTE Government Systems Corporation of Mountain View has a program that recognizes the volunteer hours GTE employees give of their own time to non-profit organizations. The SFBBO has been fortunate to have Melissa Sheehan, an SFBBO member who also is employed by GTE, earn an award for SFBBO of \$750.00 based on her volunteer service in 1991. Melissa has been recognized by GTE for the last two years with awards for SFBBO.

The members of the Board and the entire membership of SFBBO would like to extend their appreciation and thanks to both Melissa and to GTE for having such a fine program.

Newsletter

Soon you will see many changes to the Bird Observatory newsletter. Changes to the design and layout, content and with your help a new name. Changes we hope will make the newsletter more readable, more informative and keep you in touch with SFBBO activities and events.

Since this is your newsletter, we would like your help in choosing a name that will become synonymous with SFBBO. The Black-necked Stilt will remain the Bird Observatory logo and with the help of a local artist a new drawing will grace the cover of this publication. If you have suggestions for a name please mail them to SFBBO, Newsletter Editor, P.O. Box 247, Alviso, CA. 95002.

Volunteer Needs

Organize library and prepare list of books for acquisition.

Administrative help: prepare files of articles relevant to conservation issues; organize reprint library; set up paper recycling system at observatory office; many more.

Literature search for colonial bird study—requires knowledge of biology and sources of scientific articles and government reports.

Develop publicity contacts for upcoming courses, tours, and events.

Leaders for birding and nature excursions.

Observers for South Bay Shorebird and coastal bird censuses in the summer, fall, and beyond—good shorebird identification desired, but can learn.

Field assistant for rufous-crowned sparrow study—no experience necessary, but should be available approximately once a week.

Volunteers to represent the Bird Observatory at Bay area meetings and conferences.

Journal Collection

The observatory would like to update its collection of ornithology journals. If you have any of the following journals that you would like to donate, please contact the office.

Journal of Field Ornithology
1988 to present

Wilson Bulletin
1988 to present

Condor
February 1987
1989

Auk
1989

San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

1992 Summer Classes & Tours

The following class will be offered this summer. Classes begin at 7:30 pm at the observatory office. If you are not a member your class fee includes one year membership to the Observatory. All proceeds support the Observatory's projects and are tax-deductible.

Shorebird Identification and Biology

Paul Noble & Charles Pfister
Aug 19, 26; September 2
and two weekend field trips

Good course for SFBBO volunteer observers. Sharpen your skills on peeps as well as the larger shorebirds—shorebirds aren't that hard if you can get a good look. Learn about the ecology and migration patterns that make San Francisco Bay a shorebird stopover of global importance. \$50 members, \$65 non-members.

SFBBO Tours are offered as a service to our members and to the general public. Fees cover the cost of the organizer/guide and campground and museum fees. Additional costs are minimized by sharing rides and cost of meals. Families with kids are also welcome and we almost always camp near enough motels that they are a viable option to camping if you so choose.

Sierra Nevada

Paul Noble June 12-14

This trip focuses on the Sierra Nevada Mountain Bird Species. We will camp at 7100' in Placer County in the Heart of the Hudsonian life zone. We will see all common species of this zone such as the Fox Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, Hermit Warbler, Green-tailed Towhee and White-headed Woodpecker. But also less common species such as the Piliated Woodpecker and Townsend Solitair

will be seen. We will also seek out owls at night with Flammulated and Sawwhet Owls possible. Price Includes 2 nights camping in National Forest. \$50 members, \$60 non-members.

Kern River

Dan Singer June 26-28

This is a trip to a relatively unknown region of California. The South Fork of the Kern River which feeds Lake Isabella about 50 miles east of Bakersfield is one of the few spots in the state where you can expect breeding Yellow-billed Cuckoo along with Indigo Bunting and Summer Tanager. The area is also very close to Joshua Tree forest and sage brush where many desert birds are expected such as Cactus Wren, Gray Flycatcher, Black-chinned Sparrow, and Scott's Oriole. When not birding these areas we will be birding the coniferous forests of Sequoia National Forest. Most of the mountain birds common to the Southern Sierra Nevada are to be expected such as Blue Grouse, Vesper Sparrow and Hermit Warbler. With luck we may get some good owls, too. \$60 members, \$75 non-members.

Southeast Arizona

Paul Noble August 1 - 9

This time of the year Arizona produces typical Mexican specialties that can't be found anywhere else in North America. Things have changed ornithologically as well as meteorologically at this time of year in Arizona. Believe it or not, this is the time of year Arizona undergoes its second spring. Huge storm clouds come from out of the Gulf of Mexico, which produces rain that turns the landscape a lush green. The birds are great and so is the camping. Last year we saw 14 species of Humming-

birds \$205 members, \$225 non-members

For more information and a detailed itinerary call the Bird Observatory office. To register please send a \$10 deposit for classes and/or a 10% deposit for tours along with your name address, telephone number and the class/tour you would like to attend. Deposits are refundable up to 1 week before beginning date. Makes checks payable to SFBBO.

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Please post this page anywhere you feel these classes and tours would be of interest to other people.

WFO

The observatory will host the 1992 Western Field Ornithologists Conference September 18-20 at the Holiday Inn in Sunnyvale. Events include: Field and pelagic trips; a full day of speakers and an evening banquet. Volunteers will be needed to help with this event. If you would like to volunteer please call the office. In June a flyer and registration material will be mailed to all SFBBO members.

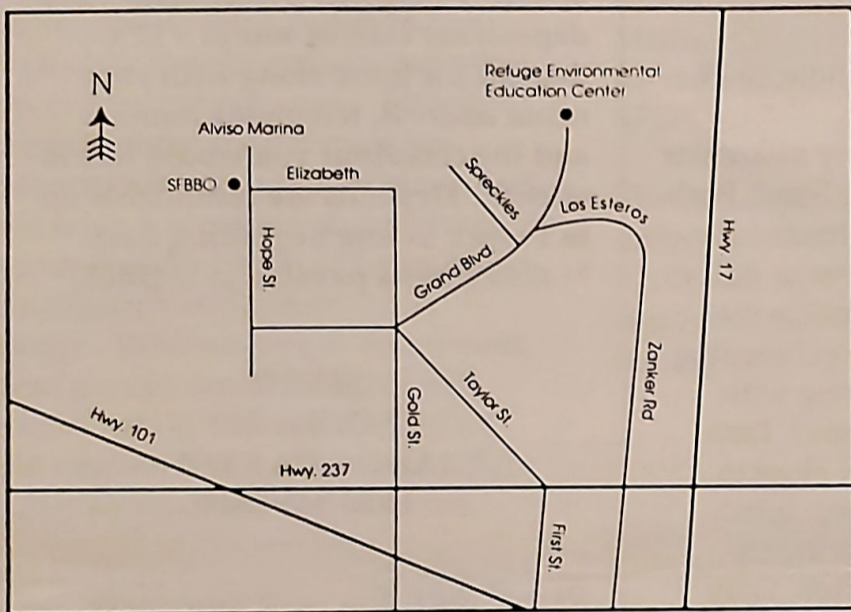
From the Biologist's Desk

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 quarterly. 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.



During the past winter SFBBO has been actively exploring ways to expand our research presence and effectiveness in San Francisco Bay. Future federal funding for representative estuarine habitats within the bay may be made available from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration which coordinates and supports a national system of reserves for estuarine research. Non-federal public lands which receive designation within the system become eligible for federal matching funds supporting research or education at the site. In mid February SFBBO led a tour of Bair Island for representatives of this National Estuarine Research Reserve program, who were reviewing potential NERR sites in the San Francisco Bay area. Following the tour, Bair Island was nominated for inclusion in the NERR program, the only South Bay site out of ten proposed for the entire estuary. Final site designations will be made in the fall of 1992.

SFBBO's 1991 field census of Heron and Egret breeding activity in the South Bay was combined with the results of a bay-wide survey for colonies, extending as far north as the Russian River, conducted by John Kelly and personnel from the Cypress Grove Preserve, part of Audubon Canyon Ranch. Total breeding numbers from the entire study area indicate the critical importance of our South Bay colonies. In 1991 these breeding sites, primarily in the vicinity of Bair Island and at Mallard Slough, supported 50% of the nesting Snowy Egrets, over 30% of breeding Black-crowned Night Herons and over 5% of the nesting Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets in the entire bay region.

One final note, in early February we submitted a proposal to the San Francisco Estuary Project requesting funding for four separate research projects here at the observatory. The Estuary Project, a joint program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the State Water Resources Control Board, will award the final grants in August.

Dianne Kopec

Executive Director
Charles Pfister

Biologist
Dianne Kopec

Board of Directors

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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 _____



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

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.