



Vicki R. Jennings

The Stilt

The Newsletter of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

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Winter 1995

An Account Of Black Skimmers Nesting On San Francisco Bay, 1994 - 1995

Valerie L. Layne

The first sightings of Black Skimmers (*Rynchops niger*) in California were reported at the Salton Sea in 1968; the first known breeding was at the Salton Sea in 1972 (McCaskie 1972). Since then they have colonized San Diego Bay and a wetland near Long Beach. Skimmers have frequently been seen in the San Francisco Bay area during the breeding season (Layne et al. in prep.). In 1989 a pair of adults (male and female) were seen roosting in a nesting colony of Forster's Terns on Bair Island (Woodin, 1990), but no breeding was documented at that time. In 1994 two pairs of Black Skimmers were finally documented nesting in the south bay. Lest we begin to think this was an anomalous event, two pairs nested again in 1995. This article is an account of the first two years of what could be a significant range expansion for this species.

In June of 1994 I was on a routine survey for nesting California Gulls and Forster's Terns on a salt pond on the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The nesting islands were spread nearly the length of the salt pond, and the levees had recently been topped with dredge spoils. I needed to see both sides of all the nesting islands to get an accurate count, so I walked the entire circumference of the pond, spotting scope perched on my shoulder. Prior to 1993 this had been the largest nesting colony of Forster's Terns on the south bay with up to 900 active nests at one time, but in 1994 there were 74 tern nests occupying only

one of the islands. As I scanned the island with my scope, I noticed two dark bumps, probably immature gulls resting in the shade of the old dredge spoils covered with alkali heath. Upon closer inspection, I realized the bumps were not gulls, and their heads were tucked beneath their wings, making identification difficult at best. Finally one of the birds raised its head; they were Black Skimmers. Later on that week I found that Bob Richmond had discovered a pair of Black Skimmers on an island at Hayward Regional Shoreline (HRS), on the very same day that I made my discovery on the refuge.

Subsequent surveys showed that the skimmers were nesting on the refuge and at HRS. The nest in Hayward was fairly well protected by a chain-link fence and a locked gate, and the birds could be viewed at a distance from a public area. The birds on the refuge were less fortunate. They

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Black Skimmer foraging in Charleston Slough (Photo by Alan Walthers)

were protected only by gates that prohibited access by motor vehicles, but not foot or bicycle traffic. This uncontrolled access could present a problem as Black Skimmers were considered a rare species on the bay, and many people would not pass-up an opportunity to observe the first nesting record for the county. The problem was compounded by the presence of a nesting colony of California Gulls on islands in the same pond and not far from where the skimmers had chosen to nest. I recall one morning at sunrise observing the female skimmer foraging on a salt pond and being chased the length of the pond, back and forth, by a large immature gull (probably a Western Gull). Studies have shown that skimmers, terns and gulls can nest in close proximity to each other without a problem in the absence of human disturbance (e. g. Safina and Burger 1983). Once disturbed, all three species react by flushing from their nests, and gulls opportunistically prey on skimmer and tern eggs and chicks. The south bay skimmers relied heavily on the mobbing behavior of the terns to chase away predators, but the skimmers on the refuge were late in getting started, and the terns had all but gone while the skimmers were still defending an unfledged chick.

Four chicks hatched at each nest; 2 (possibly 3) chicks fledged from the nest in HRS while only 1 chick fledged from the nest on the refuge. In 1995 two pairs of adults again nested in the south bay. At HRS, as in 1994, there was a male with a U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service band on his right leg. The birds did not nest on the refuge this year, instead they selected an island in a salt pond east of Charleston Slough in Mt. View, a site that could easily be viewed from a public trail with little disturbance to the birds. The pair at HRS fledged 3 chicks in 1995, while the pair across the bay fledged 2. Soon after, one of those two fledglings disappeared.

Very little is known about the wintering habits of Black Skimmers in North America, and virtually nothing is known about the origin of the birds that have nested on the bay for two years now (except that one of the males was probably banded in southern California). In order to learn more about this range expansion, we color-banded chicks from both nests. All 3 of the chicks at HRS and 1 of the 2 chicks at Mt. View were banded with a FWS band on

the left leg, and a white plastic band on the right leg. Each color band has a single black number on it. At the very least, we hope to determine if the young survive and return here to breed, and by coordinating our efforts with the researchers in southern California, we may learn more about the wintering habits of these birds and why "our" birds chose to leave traditional nesting areas.

If you see a color-banded skimmer, please call or drop us a line (even if it's not one of "our" birds) and we'll let you know where the bird was banded.

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- Murphy, R. C. 1936. *Oceanic Birds of South America*, vol. II. The Macmillan Co., New York. 1245 pp.
- Safina, C. and J. Burger. 1983. Effects of human disturbance on reproductive success in the Black Skimmer. *Condor* 85:164-171.
- Woodin, P. 1990. Could this be the place? *The Stilt* 9(1):2-3.

1996 Schedule Shorebird Census

The fall survey of shorebirds was conducted from 10-12 pm on Sunday, August 20 with good ground and aerial coverage of major high-tide roosting areas. Although it still felt like summer to us, this count was timed to catch the fall migration peak of Western Sandpipers, the most numerous species utilizing the bay.

The winter census, tentatively scheduled for Sunday, December 3, 1995, has been rescheduled for Sunday, January 21, 1996, from 9 AM to 12 noon. A "high" high tide that day will allow us a longer window of observation. Rains forced us to postpone last year's winter count and may be a factor again this winter.

The Entire 1996 Schedule

Winter count

Sunday, 21 January, 9 am-12 noon. 1st alternate date: Saturday, 3 February, 8-11 am. 2nd alternate date: Sunday, 18 February, 9 am-12 noon.

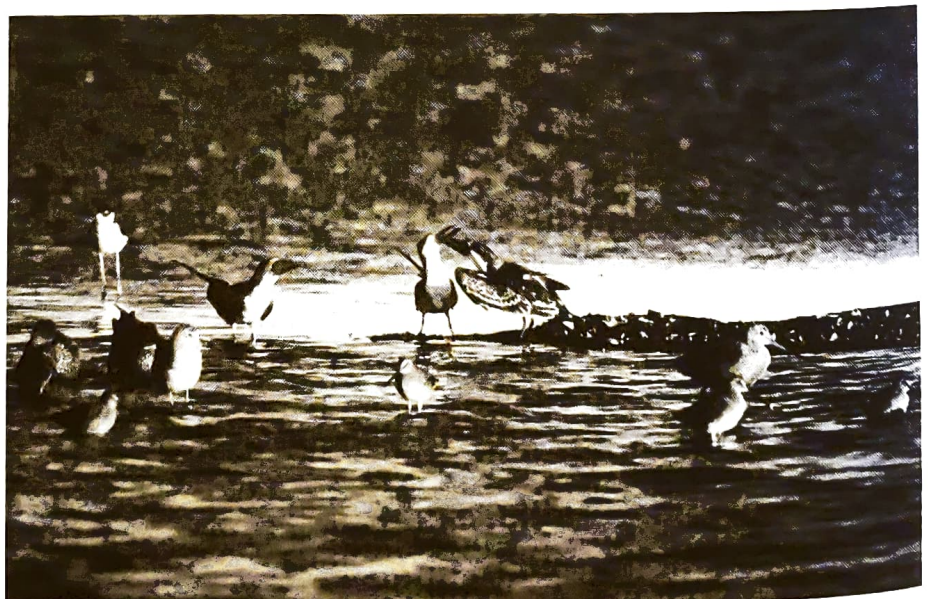
Spring count

Sunday, 14 April, 8-11 am.

Fall count

Sunday, 25 August, 9:30-11:30 am.

Please plan on attending the pre-count workshop on Wednesday, January 10, at 7:30 pm, here at the Observatory.



Black Skimmer juvenile at Charleston Slough, already bigger than his mother (Photo by Alan Walthers)

Birds of the South Bay: Black Skimmer

Valerie L. Layne

The Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*) is a member of the family Laridae which includes gulls and terns. There are three species of skimmer worldwide; the African Skimmer (*R. flavirostris*) which occurs on both coasts and rivers of Africa, the Indian Skimmer (*R. albicollis*) which is found on rivers and lakes in India, Burma and Southeast Asia, and the Black Skimmer, which is the largest and is found in North and South America, ranging from Massachusetts to Argentina on the east coast and on the west coast from Chile to Southern California, occasionally venturing into Northern California.



*A newly banded skimmer chick at Hayward
(Photo by Janet T. Hanson)*

nest is a bare scrape in which up to four or five mottled eggs are laid at intervals of one or two days. Incubation begins with the first egg laid and lasts from 21 to 23 days (up to 25 or more if the birds are disturbed). Both sexes share incubation duties and feeding of the young, however females may feed the chicks more when they are small with the males increasing feeding duties when the birds are older. The young fledge after about 3 1/2 weeks.

Skimmers are probably best known for their unique foraging method of flying low over the water with their lower mandible

The Black Skimmer is a very unusual looking bird, possessing some of the most specialized features in the bird world. It is the only bird known to have the lower mandible longer than the upper. The lower mandible grows twice as fast as the upper, and is "filed down" by friction while the skimmer feeds. The skimmer is also the only bird known to have pupils that close into vertical slits. This adaptation increases foraging time, allowing skimmers to feed in very bright light in the middle of the day, and also in very low light.

Skimmers breed from April through August, returning to a previously used nesting site as long as they successfully raise young. They usually nest in mixed colonies with terns, benefiting from the aggressive mobbing behavior of the terns as they chase away predators. Their nests are on sand, dredge spoils or on wrack deposited on salt marsh. The skimmer

extended into the water, "skimming". This method of feeding is tactile rather than visual; when the skimmer touches a fish the mandible snaps shut, pulling the bird's head down and underneath its body. Young birds, no doubt practicing their technique, have been known to "capture" sticks in this fashion. Why the world is not littered with the corpses of skimmers that have struck a submerged object while foraging, is a mystery. Robert Cushman Murphy wrote in 1936: "...I myself have seen skimmers catch their beaks on submerged twigs or standing oyster-shells, so that their heads were jerked down and backward, in one instance causing a bird to turn half a somersault and tumble into the water." The skimmer's bill has inspired several colorful names for this bird, among them: scissor-bill, cutwater, shearwater, and in Central America, rayador, or "one who draws lines", no doubt a reference to the linear wake left while skimming on calm water.

Calendar of Member Events

November 19, Sunday
Avian Botulism Monitoring.*

November 22, Wednesday
Avian Botulism Monitoring.*

December. HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

January 10, Wednesday, 7:30 PM
South Bay Shorebird Census, Pre-count workshop. Please join us here at the Observatory classroom for a review of data collection and censusing techniques, shorebird identification and assignment of areas. RSVP by January 8.

January 16, Tuesday, 7:30 PM
First meeting of Gull Identification class, Don Starks, Instructor. See class schedule for further information.

January 19, Friday. Annual Clapper Rail survey, Palo Alto Baylands. Call for time and meeting place.

January 21, Sunday. 9 AM - 12 noon
South Bay Shorebird Census, Winter Count.

February. Colonial Waterbird Monitoring Program. Pre-season workshop. Times to be announced.

February 3, Saturday. 8 - 11 AM
South Bay Shorebird Census. First alternate date.

February 13, Tuesday, 7 PM
First meeting of Shorebird Biology, Identification and Censusing Technique class, Howard L. Cogswell, Instructor. See class schedule for further information.

March 7, Thursday, 7:30 PM
First meeting of Owl Biology and Identification class, Paul Noble,

14th Annual Meeting and Picnic . . . with Live Entertainment!

On September 23, members and friends of SFBBO gathered at our historic Bayside Cannery homebase in Alviso to celebrate the close of yet another season of breeding bird and shorebird surveys.

Board member Lance Hull manned up his state-of-the-art barbecue to produce some really terrific chicken, while members and friends provided the delicious accompaniments, including oven baked Brie in phyllo (thanks again Rich! - you're welcome here anytime!). From green salads to great desserts, we all pushed away from the table with big smiles. Good coffee too, thanks to Board Member Mike Spence.

Inside the cannery, visitors viewed an art exhibit of donated paintings and some very special drawings exhibited and sold by Terry Hart. An after dinner awards ceremony was held, with prizes awarded to the highest ticket seller in our July donation drawing, held in conjunction with Wildlife Rescue of Palo Alto. Board members Ginny Becchine and Robin Smith tied for the honor. A random drawing was held, with the following results:

Jan Hintermeister: Whale-watching trip for two.
Courtesy of Cheeseman's Ecology Safaris.

Marge Kolar: framed Burrowing Owl etching.
Courtesy of Terry Hart

Lou Young: Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Monterey County.
Courtesy of Monterey Peninsula Audubon Society

Don Emery: California Birds, by Arnold Small.
Courtesy of Ibis Publications

Roni and Scott Chapin: Shorebird pin.
Courtesy of Wild Bryd Jewelry

Mr. & Mrs. Desmond Wytmans: \$25 gift certificate.
Courtesy of Wild Bird Center, San Carlos.

Nancy DeStefanis and her accompanists on harmony and accordion serenaded the crowd with her rendition of "MY Blue Herons", to the tune of "My Blue Heaven".



All photos courtesy of Steve Dakin



In the shadow of SFBBO's Bayside Cannery home, friends queue up to partake of barbecued chicken with all the fixings.

At this time, we also honored those Observatory volunteers who have made outstanding contributions during the past year, and in some cases, for many seasons before then. The 1995 Volunteer of the Year was awarded to Kappy Sprenger. For many years, Kappy has been tending to sick and injured birds that we retrieve from the sloughs and marshes during our regular surveys. She also finds time to participate in our shorebird counts and our colonial waterbird monitoring. This year the Board of Directors was able to approve an award of SFBBO funds to help defray the costs of her rehabilitation work. Thanks, Kappy! The 1995 Research Volunteer of the Year was presented to Sue Macias, who often seems more like a staff member (albeit unpaid!) than a volunteer. Sue knows her way around nearly our entire study area and can spot Snowy Plover nests that anyone else might miss. When called upon for help, her almost invariable response is "sure!" Sue was awarded a new shoreline

guide and several accessories for trail biking, one of her favorite activities.

And finally, we had a very special individual who contributed to our successful season in very unique and high profile way. In view of last year's Think Quick Award, we decided to customize this year's award and call it the Think BIG! Award, in honor of its recipient, Nancy DeStefanis. Nancy managed to turn a small Great Blue heronry into a media event, with 18 or so participating field observers and coverage in the San Francisco papers. She even made Herb Caen's column, with a reference to "My Blue Herons". Thanks, Nancy, for an excellent job of raising public awareness of these beautiful birds and the Observatory!

After the awards, it was only fitting that our evening's speaker should present a program on local herons and egrets. Photographer Philip Greene, who was instrumental in securing protection for the Marin Island

rookery, presented a beautiful series of slides of the Islands and the birds that nest there, with an eloquent discussion and sometimes even demonstration, of courtship rituals.

The staff of SFBBO send special thanks to our Board Members and friends who helped to make the entire evening so enjoyable.



Howard Cogswell, newly elected Board President, introduced the evening's special guest speaker



Ginny Becchine, outgoing Board President, welcomed members and guests.



Philip Greene, professional photographer and heron and egret specialist, presented a very aesthetic view of the Marin Island rookery.

Message From The President

At the meeting of the SFBBO Board of Directors on October 24 (continued from a very brief meeting following the general membership meeting and annual picnic in September), the officers of the board shown on the back of this newsletter were elected to serve until next year's annual meeting. After considerable discussion with Lou Young, who has been vice-president repeatedly during his several terms on the board, my effort to have him become president was met with polite but resolute resistance and the whole process was converted to one of commandeering the fast train that passes through Alviso daily and putting me on it as the ticket-holder. So, for the next year I agreed to take on the duties with the understanding that Lou will indeed be available as a candidate in Fall 1996 (his term on the board extends one year beyond mine). By the SFBBO Bylaws directors may serve only two successive three-year terms before moving off the board for at least one year.

Our heartfelt accolades go to **Ginny Becchine**, however, who has served admirably as President of SFBBO since Fall 1992. Not only has she conducted the board meetings most efficiently (I can't hope to equal her therein), she has been identified with SFBBO since its very start. In the first year or so she was a volunteer, but I find her listed as a Board member as of early 1983 and she guided and reported on the special study of bird movements around the Palo Alto Airport in 1984-85 and was project volunteer coordinator for the Colonial Bird study in 1985. Those who attended the monthly membership meetings remember those "live-wire" updates of the observatory's various projects that she gave at many of those meetings, giving real impetus to the otherwise occasionally faltering interest of other volunteers. Ginny served previous terms on the Board in 1983-85 and 1988-90. For all that input to SFBBO's continuity and welfare, we THANK YOU, GINNY, for the many jobs well done! And we'll still need your advice and counsel as a board member and past-president this coming year.

Writing the previous paragraph has re-emphasized to me the truly outstanding feature in the make-up and operations of SFBBO — the tremendous dedication and participation which we have from our many volunteers. It's the real key to our success on the various studies we have done around the South Bay and vicinity. There seems to be a lull right now in finances coming in for additional studies, and the annual "goals" meeting of the Board later this month will address what we can do about that. In the meantime, we should continue to foster the interest and abilities of our volunteers and recruit more of them to be ready to participate.

To obtain region-wide data on such projects as the 1992-93 study of numbers and habitat-use in high-tide periods by shorebirds, or our ongoing annual monitoring of Colonial Waterbird breeding, the proficiency of all participants and the data gathering methods should be developed to a reasonably comparable degree. SFBBO's geographic position makes it ideally located for continued work on shorebirds using the intertidal and salt pond habitats around the bay. So we are now offering a short course aimed at advancing our knowledge and abilities with respect to that group of birds (see course announcements in this issue), as well as several others to be started some time this year.

I invite every member to participate in as many of these courses as you can. With a cadre of volunteers able to recognize and census birds of species likely to be targets of future study and to make reliable observations on their behavior and habitat needs, SFBBO will be in a position to coordinate quite a variety of research projects. There will be more on this later, as plans are completed for a series of different short-term courses or training sessions.

— Howard L. Cogswell

Shorebirds of the Pacific Northwest

By Dennis Paulson

Drawings by Jim Erckmann

REVIEWED BY RICHARD C. CARLSON

This is a beautiful and fascinating book that should be on the bookshelf of anyone in the North America who is seriously interested in shorebirds. Paulson brilliantly combines a beautifully illustrated identification guide to all the shorebirds of the United States with insightful commentary on their status and distribution in the Pacific Northwest. It is illustrated profusely with excellent color pictures that are supplemented with numerous black and white drawings.

The book is invaluable as just an identification guide. It covers almost every shorebird that one could conceivably see in the U.S. or Canada. These include such rarities as the Spoonbill Sandpiper, Broad-billed Sandpiper and Pratincole. The book is organized by family, and some of the most interesting text and illustrations compare difficult to differentiate species such as American and Pacific Golden Plover. The identification section thoroughly reviews and illustrates all the plumage changes of every species; down to individual feathers in some cases.

Each species account discusses general distribution, northwest status, habitat and be-

havior, structure, plumage, and identification. The identification section goes over general, breeding, non-breeding, and juvenal plumages, as well as voice and in-flight characteristics. The plumage accounts generally include plumage timing charts, so the birder not only knows when to look for the bird, but what plumage they will be in. The species accounts also include further questions, notes, photo references, and literature references.

The color photographs are outstanding. Paulson wisely chose the best available pictures, even when they were taken outside of the Pacific Northwest, such as the Great Knot photographed in Kyushu, Japan. Paulson took many of the pictures himself; his series of photos of Golden Plover are particularly outstanding. The many line drawings are extremely helpful for identification, but their quality sometimes does not match that of the photos. For example, any experienced birder looking at plates 33 or 36 would not recognize the illustrated birds, Wandering Tattler and Spotted Sandpiper, without reading the captions.

The regional status accounts are entertain-

ing reading for anyone, and excellent guides for resident or visiting birders. This section does not just mention a few good sites; it gives high counts by date and location for every season as well as early and late dates for sightings. The locations are all specified in more detail in an appendix. Status accounts also include comments on population trends in the region.

Technically, the book is also very good. The text is well cross-referenced to the illustrations and is well indexed. The reference list is enormous, and each species account both refers the reader to specific references and comments on illustration errors in some of the more common shorebird books. (A book this large must have some errors, but they were beyond the search capabilities of this reviewer.) One of the most interesting sections for both professional and amateur is "Further Questions" which directs the reader to open issues needing further research.

Published by University of Washington Press and the Seattle Audubon Society
Available from ABA Sales (800) 634-7736
\$40.00.

SFBBO Updates

SFBBO at Moffett Field

Biologist Valerie Layne recently completed the final report on sensitive species surveys at Moffett Field, under contract to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The report details the results of nearly 10 months of field surveys and assessment of potential habitat for the California tiger salamander, California red-legged frog, Western Snowy Plover, California Least Tern, Salt Marsh Yellowthroat, and the salt marsh wandering shrew on Moffett Field. This report will aid the NASA/Ames Research Center in preparing management plans for the natural resources on Moffett Field.

USFWS Contract

SFBBO recently received a small grant from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to summarize data on two sets of toxicological studies. The studies were conducted on Common Murres collected off the coast of central California, and on duck eggs.

Wetlands Habitat Goals

A coalition of state and federal resource regulatory agencies was recently formed to establish wetlands habitat goals for the San Francisco Bay region. The purpose of the Bay Area Wetlands Ecosystem Goals Project is to provide biological information to be used in the management and restoration of wetlands throughout the bay area. Experts in all areas of wetland biology, including SFBBO and other private research organizations, will work with the resource agencies to produce these goals.

Shoreline Guide

Ohlone Audubon, Alameda County, proudly announces the publication of their new shoreline guide, *Of Marsh and Mud*. This easily readable and accurate paperback describes 8 plants, 12 birds, 9 mammals, 10 fish, 9 larger arthropods and 10 mollusks found in the salt marsh and mudflat environment. It is written by Dave Riensche, a Naturalist at Coyote Hills Regional Park, and the drawings are all original work by Kevin Meek. Individual copies are \$8.50 plus \$1.50 shipping and handling. Send orders and check payable to Ohlone Audubon Society, 1608 Walden Court,

Memberships

We welcome the following new and returning members of SFBBO (September - October 95):

Associate:

Desmond Wytmans (r)

Family:

Charles and Joan Coston (r); Carol and Tom Henry; Jim, Leanne and Jenna Svoboda

Regular:

Christopher Frank; Lynne Johnson; John Luther

Senior/Student:

Carol Borck; Lee Lovelady (r) ; Joan Priest; Frances Shaw

Contributions

Special thanks to the following for their gracious donations to SFBBO (July - October 1995):

David and Nancy Angelesco; Lori Ayre; Ronald Barklow and Viola Saima-Barklow; Joyce Bartlett; Ginny Becchine; Bob Berka; Edith Black; Richard Brannon; Mary Brezner; Juliette Bryson; Richard and Pat Carlson; Roni and Scott Chapek; Doug and Gail Cheeseman; Howard Cogswell; Janice and Frank Delfino; Nancy DeStefanis; Jean and Pat Dubois; Don and Margaret Emery; Lorrie and Ron Emery; Dave and Susie Formenti; Christina Garcia and Marcelino Madrigal; Harriet Gerson; Madelon Halpern; Jay and Janet Hanson; Elaine Harding-Smith; Carl and Marge Heintze; Jan Hintermeister; Lance Hull and Claire

Rozman; Lee Hung; Sue Hunt and Byron Richards; Martha Hunton; Paul Jones; Marge Kolar; Kathleen Kovar; Karen Kroner; Steve and Lisa Kurasch; Valerie Layne; William Lofthouse; David McIntyre; Peter Metropulos; Fran Mewaldt; Carol Miller; Ruth Ann and John Moore; Bess Nericcio; Paul Noble; Carlin Otto; Jean Palmeter; Bill Park; Ruth Parsons; Virginia Peterson; Marie Ranger; Donald Reinberg; Laurel Rezeau; Janice and Edward Rooks; April and Mark Sapsford; Stephen Schneider; Dean Schuler and Rich Kuehn; Tibby Simon; Sandra Skolnik; Robin Smith; Frances Snoko; Mike Spence; Karlene and Terry Stoker; Susan Stout; Jesse Suckow and Chris Crowell; Hazel Tilden; Ruth and Gene Troetschler; University of California Press; Mark Weinberger; Wild Bryde Jewelry; Wild Bird Center, San Carlos; Allan Wofchuck; Desmond Wytmans; Lou and Jean Young

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The Bird Observatory is located at 1290 Hope St. in Alviso. The office is open weekdays and some weekends, but specific hours vary with our field schedule. Before stopping in, call (408) 946-6548 and check when we will be available.

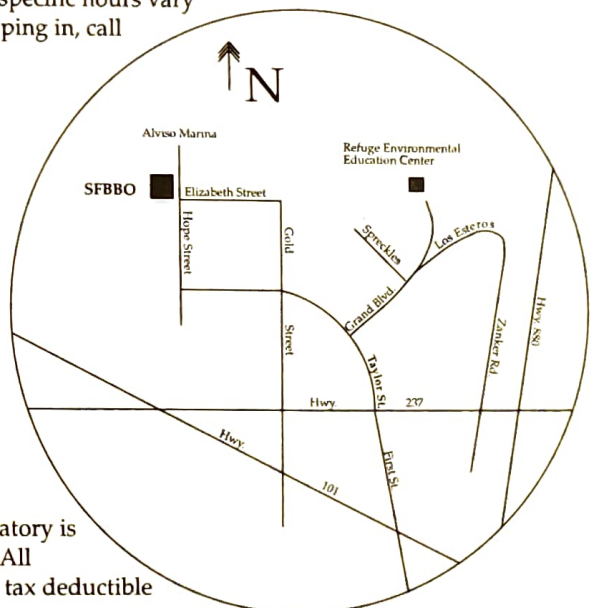
The Board meetings are open to the membership. Call the Observatory office for dates and times.

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The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory is a non-profit (501-C-3) corporation. All memberships and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Annual memberships are as follows:

<i>Patron:</i> \$2,000	<i>Associate:</i> \$50
<i>Life:</i> \$400	<i>Family:</i> \$35
<i>Sustaining:</i> \$200	<i>Individual:</i> \$25
<i>Contributing:</i> \$100	<i>Student/Senior:</i> \$15



Return to the Classroom

SFBBO Renews Its Commitment to Education

by Janet Tashjian Hanson

One of the primary goals of SFBBO is to promote understanding of the Bay's birdlife. We accomplish this through workshops that train and educate our volunteers before they undertake field work. Through participation as volunteer field observers, our members have the opportunity to learn first-hand about the birds and variety of habitats they utilize.

In past years, we also offered a series of classes on advanced bird identification techniques and other topics that were extremely popular. In a survey conducted last year, SFBBO members and friends indicated a strong desire to see these classes reinstated as a part of SFBBO's educational program. Therefore, we are extremely pleased to present the 1996 Schedule of Classes presented as a pull-out in this newsletter. The topics and instructors were chosen with the survey's results in mind; we strove to get the very best teachers for the most "in-demand" topics. Please note that in the future, not every class will be offered every year.

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SFBBO Board Member Mike Spence talks birds to students at St. Joseph's Elementary School in Menlo Park.

We will assess demand and availability of teachers, to offer a changing landscape of instruction best suited to the needs of our members. We also gladly accept suggestions and recommendations for future classes. As we go to press, we are also planning an SFBBO-sponsored, mid- to late 1996 trip to Costa Rica, to be led by Dan Keller. He is currently exploring time frames for such a trip and will be presenting options to the Board in January. More information will be forthcoming.

Another educational objective addressed during our recent

Board retreat was increasing our outreach to the schools. Even with so much media (and political) focus on wetlands, there is very little discussion of the wildlife that utilizes this type of habitat around the Bay, with the possible exception of endangered species, such as the Clapper Rail. Several current Board members, notably Robin Smith, retired teacher, and Mike

Spence, owner of Local Birds, Inc. have a strong interest and expertise in grade school education. We plan to increase our participation in the Shorebird Sister Schools Program, a project promoted by the Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival and Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. This spring we will be visiting more schools, helping the kids learn about shorebird biology and particularly the spectacular spring migration that occurs along the Pacific Flyway. Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer instructor for this program should give us a call.

San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

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