

The Stilt

The Newsletter of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

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Vicki R. Jennings

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A Team Effort with Golden Gate Audubon Volunteers Thwart Predators in the Heronry

by Nancy DeStefanis,
Site Coordinator, Colonial Waterbird Monitoring Project

September was a busy month for San Francisco members of SFBBO.

Guided by Skip Schwartz, Executive Director of Audubon Canyon Ranch, volunteers installed sheet metal collars on twenty-nine trees sheltering San Francisco's only heronry. Located on an island at Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park, their heronry had been threatened by raccoons swimming over to the island at the conclusion of the nesting season in June of this year.

With Skip's expertise, we modeled our project on the experience of Audubon Canyon Ranch. After raccoon attacks in 1975 and 1983 had almost wiped out a

third of the egrets and half of the heron colony, ACR took protective measures and collared 400 redwood trees. According to Schwartz, the collars were an enormous success: "We haven't had a raccoon problem in the colony since."

In a collaborative effort with Golden Gate Audubon Society (GGAS), SFBBO sought approval from San Francisco's Recreation and Park Department for volunteers to install and paint the collars with the understanding that SFBBO and GGAS would underwrite all costs for the project. The Recreation and Park Department approved the project and



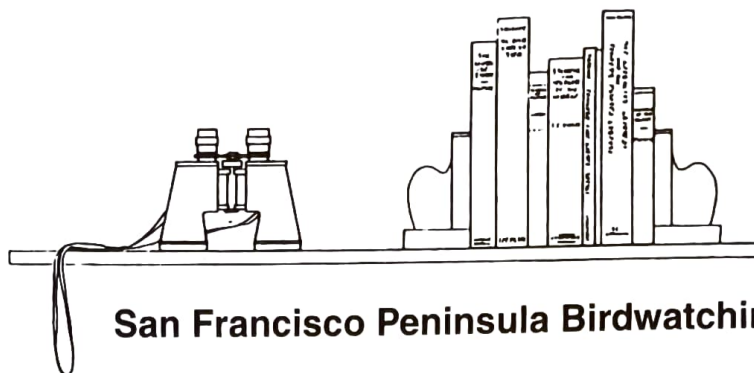
Eric Tuzzio, Kate Ulrich, Sharon Nearn and Carol Henry add a coat of paint to camouflage the collars. (photo by Tom Henry)

Continued on page 2

- located a Lanceolated Monklet - a "lifer" for both.
- Seeing and hearing a troop of Howler Monkeys directly over the road.
- Being the first group to use the new "Toney Trail" at Tarcol, and christening it with great view of a pair of White-necked Puffbirds.
- The parade of Scarlet Macaws over "Macaw Hill" - 75 one evening, 114 the next.
- The food at the lodges - who would have anticipated Tiramisu for dessert? And most of us established a loving relationship with "Lizard (Lizano) Sauce".
- Wonderful birding from the verandahs at Rancho Naturalista and Tarcol.
- Anticipating seeing ace photographer Michael Armer's photos, and chief videographer Rich Kuehn's videos.
- The generally laid-back, flexible, but very professional tone of the whole trip.

When it rained or scouting reports indicated that a particular trail wasn't accessible or was not productive, there was always an alternate plan. If anyone wanted to see a particular bird Dan arranged to try to get it for them. And there was time for leisurely meals and socializing.

For some of us this was our second, third or fourth trip to Costa Rica, but we still saw new birds and animals. And there are still some birds on our "want" list that will occasion another trip to Central America. There is probably no place in that region which has better birding than Costa Rica, and certainly there is no place friendlier. The trip price included a great tee shirt featuring Dan's artistry. The SFBBO board is considering whether to sponsor more trips, either during peak season in January or another trip during August 97's mini-summer. Please let us know if you and your birding friends are interested - a great



San Francisco Peninsula Birdwatching

Sequoia Audubon Society proudly announces the immediate availability of the newly revised edition of San Francisco Peninsula Birdwatching. This guide to birding sites in San Mateo and San Francisco Counties covers the magnificent diversity of habitats in such favorite spots as: Golden Gate Park, Pescadero Marsh, Foster City shoreline and lagoons, Ano Nuevo State Reserve, Lake Merced and much more.

Revised version features include:

- * 23 fully updated, plus 3 entirely new, birding area descriptions
- * new maps of the best birding areas
- * over 20 high quality illustrations
- * a complete index of bird species and locations

Available at \$14.95 plus \$3.30 for tax, shipping and handling from: Sequoia Audubon Society, 30 West 39th Avenue, #202, San Mateo, CA 94403 or phone 415/345-3724.

1997 Wildlife Rescue/SFBBO Donation Drawing

Many of you supported the Observatory through donations to our 1996 Donation Drawing, held in cooperation with Wildlife Rescue of Palo Alto. SFBBO was able to raise \$760 this year. Among the winners were some of our own members, including Peter Metropulos - Dinner for 2 at the Fish Market, Sue Hunt - Pier 39 Fun Pack for 4, and Carol Oda - a magnum of Domaine Chandon.

This great fund-raiser is made possible by the generosity of the companies donating prizes and the hard work of Wildlife Rescue's fundraising crew in securing those prizes. Then our own members take on the job of collecting donations. This year's top 2 money raisers were Robin Smith and Ginny Becchine. Thanks to all who donated!

15th Anniversary!

SFBBO's Annual General Membership Meeting and Barbecue

By Susan Stout

The meeting this year was again celebrated with a picnic/potluck dinner. It was held at the Bayside Cannery Building in Alviso, beginning at 4:00 p.m. with an informal bird walk to the Marina, led by Dr. Howard Cogswell.

There were nearly 80 people in attendance, plus several children. The main course, barbecued chicken was prepared by Mike Spence, ably assisted by Lou Young. At the end of dinner, the members were entertained by the Gospel Accordion to Women, Nancy DeStefanis and Sharon Walters, who performed "The Presidential Polka", "Ghost Flyers in the Sky", a reprise of last year's "My Blue Herons" and closed with "Bye Bye Birdies".

Executive Director Janet Hanson led the business meeting, giving thanks to the entertainers and the BBQ chefs. Lou Young promoted the sale of his citrus peeler/crab picker/fuse puller/paint stirrer, etc., a bargain at \$1.00, \$.92 of which is a donation to the Observatory. Also available for sale were *Sequoia Audubon's San Francisco Peninsula Birdwatching* and *Marin County's Breeding Bird Atlas*.

President Howard Cogswell noted the Observatory's 15th anniversary and the presence of several charter members at the meeting, including founding members Theresa and Mike Rigney. Dr. Cogswell then led the election of new members to the Board of Directors, the membership having been notified of these nominations in the previous newsletter. The nominees were Dick Carlson, for a second 3-year term, as well as Anne Moser and Ed Pandolfino as new board members. It was moved by Ginny Becchine to accept the slate as presented and this was seconded by Dave McIntyre. Dr. Cogswell announced there would be a brief board meeting following the general

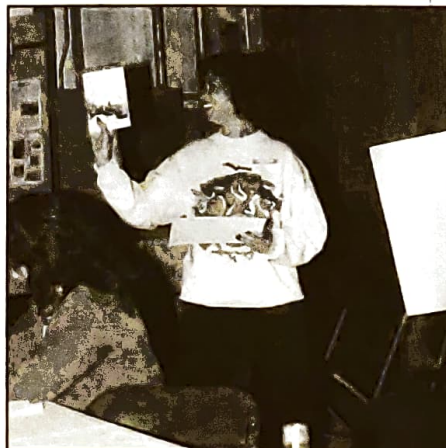


Guest speaker, Dave Shuford of PRBO. (photo by Steve Dakin)

meeting for the election of officers and setting of the next board meeting.

Janet and Howard acknowledged the top fund-raiser for ticket sales in both the Wildlife Rescue/SFBBO drawing and the arrangement of the Costa Rica trip, board member Robin Smith, with a bottle of Hawk Crest wine.

Valerie Layne, the outgoing biologist was given an outstanding service certificate and a book, *The Beak of the Finch*.

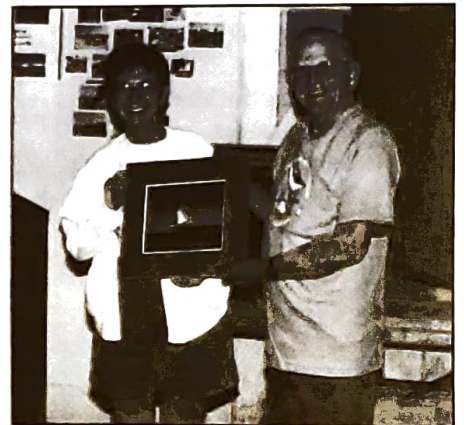


Karlene Stoker (and husband Terry), Research Volunteers of the Year. (photo by Steve Dakin)

The Research Volunteers of the Year were Karlene and Terry Stoker, who received a certificate and a copy of *When Elephants Weep, The Emotional Lives of Animals*.

Ginny Becchine was given Volunteer of the Year award, commemorating orating many years of service on SFBBO's Board of Directors, with a certificate and a copy of a Black Skimmer photo, taken by member Alan Walther.

The "fun" award this year was the "Think Water" Award, given with



Dr. Cogswell congratulates 1996 Volunteer of the Year, Ginny Becchine. (photo by Steve Dakin)

good humor to Mike Spence, for all his help with our new brochure and improved look of our newsletter and his input on educational goals. He received a certificate and a bottle of wine.

Following the business meeting, member Rich Kuehn presented his superb video of the SFBBO sponsored trip to Costa Rica in August, led by Dan Keller.

The main speaker was Dave Shuford who addressed the topic "The Current State of California Ornithology".



SFBBO Updates

Ramsar Kick-off

The Ramsar Convention is a treaty among 92 nations, that provides a framework for the conservation of wetlands. The original treaty was signed in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran and there are hundreds of recognized wetlands in Europe, Asia and Africa. The U.S. did not sign on until 1986 and currently has 15 Ramsar sites, with only one west of the Rockies. On October 25th, a kick-off meeting was held in Cupertino to gain support for the nomination of San Francisco Bay as a Ramsar site, a process to be led by the Sierra Club. SFBBO staff and board members attended, offered technical support and were pleased to meet Representative Anna Eshoo and State Senator Byron Sher.

Cargill Salt Division Fall Tour

The bay's salt harvest takes place in the fall and a special invitation-only tour was hosted by Cargill to demonstrate the process. SFBBO staff and several board members attended the meeting, which included a processing plant walk-through, an up-close view of the final crystallizers and a luncheon in Fremont with Undersecretary of the Interior John Garamendi as guest speaker.

Mountain View Shoreline Fox Policy

In October, SFBBO staff were invited to attend a meeting regarding the presence of the non-native Red Fox at Mountain View Shoreline Park. City officials are in the process of formulating policy on the fox on their property and sought the input of Observatory biologists, the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge biologists and others.

Banded American Avocets

In mid-October, Dave Mehlman, a researcher with the National Biological Service in Corvallis, solicited the Observatory's help in searching for American Avocets banded in Lake County, Oregon. With permission granted by the Refuge and Cargill, we took Dave and his assistant on a south-bay-wide search over a 2 day period, targeting mudflats and partially drained ponds with large flocks of avocets. Banded adults have 3 color bands plus an aluminum band above the left "knee" and 3 more colorbands above the right. Birds banded as chicks have 1 colorband above each knee plus the service band. With 10 colors in use and 7 bands on an adult, the research team is able to track individual birds, if sighted and reported. Even on such a quick trip, Dave saw a total of 25 birds here on the bay and in Arcata. One interesting bird was banded at Honey Lake in Lassen Co., seen at another site near the Oregon-California border and was now here in the south bay. It's not easy to spot

banded birds (look for "thick knees") and to patiently sort out what colors they are wearing, especially if muddy, but the reward is fascinating information on the travels of the bay's avocets.

Black Skimmers

As we go to press, 5 Black Skimmers are loafing on an island in Charleston Slough, including 2 adults and 3 first-year birds, at least 2 of which are wearing the white color bands applied by SFBBO Biologist Valerie Layne at Hayward this past summer. This summer, another pair of skimmers made two nesting attempts on islands in the Mountain View area but eventually abandoned potential nests at both sites.

Santa Clara Valley Water District Funds Heron and Egret Monitoring Project

We recently received funding from the Santa Clara Valley Water District to support our 1996 monitoring project of all heron and egret species in Santa Clara County. We welcome this much needed help for part of our larger effort to document all colonies of these waterbirds in the four south bay counties.



Our thanks to these supporters of the Observatory

Memberships

We welcome the following new and returning members of SFBBO (August through October 1996):

Melissa Andres, Edith Black, Amy Brokering, Denise Catalano, Kelly Davidson, Adrian del Nevo, Julia Denney, Mike Feighner, Robert Gross, Jean Halford, Cecily Harris, Kathleen Harris, Garth Harwood, Claudia and Scott Hein, Carol and Tom Henry, Grant and Karen Hoyt, Caralisa Hughes, Amy Johnson, Timothy Johnson, Thomas Korn, Margaret Limberatos, Joyce Loughmiller, Lee Lovelady, Lisa Luke, John Luther, Lori Mann,

Donald Mayall, Sharon Nearn, Paul Ostler, John and Nena Padley, Jean Perata, Anne Rosenthal, Doni Saunders, Pamela Shandrick, Al Spears, Scott Terrill, Neal Van Keuren.

Brokering, Richard and Pat Carlson, Denise Catalano, Howard Cogswell, Adrian del Nevo, Don and Margaret Emery, Leda Beth Gray, Garth Harwood, Amy Johnson, Timothy Johnson, Rich Kuehn, Peter LaTourette, Lisa Luke, David Mehlman, Anne Moser, Paul Ostler, Ed Pandolfino, Pat Pauch, Jim Richter, Dave Riensche, Mike and Theresa Rigney, Doni Saunders, Robin Smith, Philip Smith, Lou and Jean Young.

Contributions

We thank the following individuals for their contributions to SFBBO (August through October):

Jean Alexander, Paul and Joan Armer, Richard Baird, Ronald Barklow, Amy



Board of Directors

Lou Young - *President*
Susan Stout - *Vice President*
Richard Carlson - *Treasurer*
Robin W. Smith - *Secretary*
Howard L. Cogswell, Ph.D.
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W. David Shuford - *Point Reyes Bird Observatory*
Nils Warnock, Ph.D. - *University of Nevada, Reno*

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.

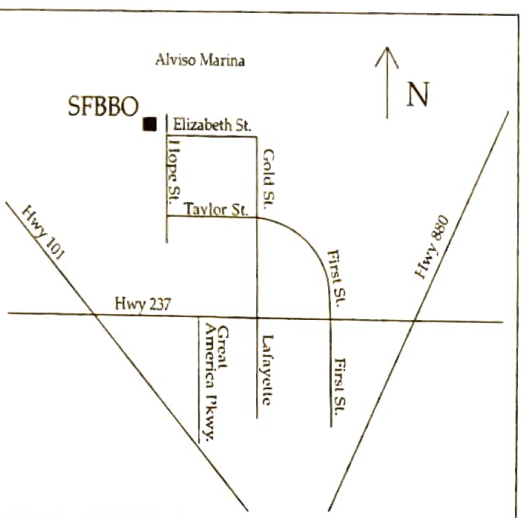
The Board meetings are open to the membership. Call the Observatory office for dates and times.

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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:



Patron: \$2,000
Life: \$400
Sustaining: \$200
Contributing: \$100

Associate: \$50
Family: \$35
Individual: \$25
Student/Senior: \$15

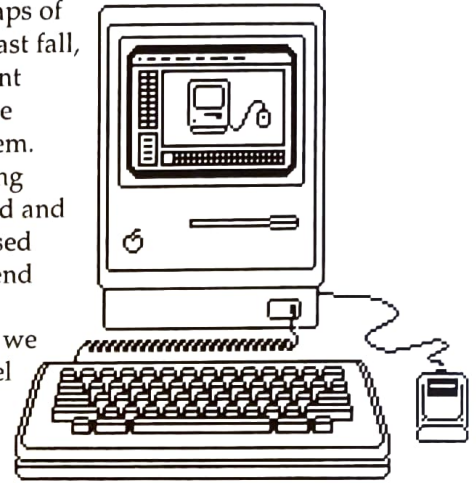
Has Your Time Come?

Please don't panic. We are merely referring to the renewal of your membership in the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory. In a move demonstrating our database expertise and cutting edge technology, we are now putting the expiration date of each and every membership in the top right hand corner of the mailing label. With one simple point-and-click, we hope to enable and encourage all our members to renew well in advance of their drop-dead date, and by doing so, to save precious Observatory funds in postage, reminder letters, return envelopes and all the other paper that winds up in the recycle pile. See Page 7 of this newsletter or the enclosed return envelope for current membership rates. We will send a Local Bird Guide, courtesy of Local Birds, Inc. with every Family membership renewal and a new 15th anniversary commemorative T-shirt with every renewal at the Associate level.

Our members are the Observatory's greatest asset. We know many of you personally and value each of you individually. You are one of the most supportive and steadfast memberships our development advisors have ever seen! We know you will appreciate being able to help us save money and time better spent on our mission of education and research. Thanks for your help!

Special News for Our Map Lovers and Special Thanks to these Contributors

Many of our volunteers know of the problems we have had obtaining current, accurate maps of our study areas. This past fall, we had several important contributions toward the resolution of that problem. First, Lou and Tim Young increased our PC's speed and memory with funds raised during last year's year end appeal. With these improvements in place, we were able to install Corel Draw, a top-drawer drawing and graphics editing program, again courtesy of Lou Young.

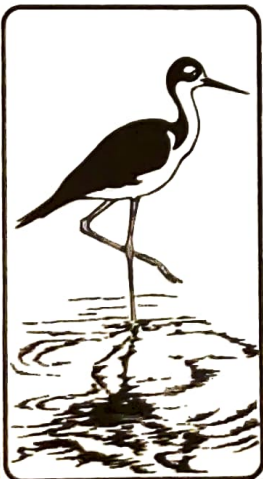


Then through the generosity of Jay Hanson and Visioneer Inc., we obtained a Paper Port sheet-fed scanner. Now we can scan in maps of our study areas, then import them into Corel Draw to customize them for Observatory use. We just got this system assembled and will be working with it over the winter months. Thanks to all who have worked on this project so far. Once again, it is amazing to see all that can be accomplished with team effort.



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