

The Stilt

Vol. 18 No. 3

Fall 1999

The Newsletter of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

The Latest Tern of Events

by Douglas A. Bell

At the beginning of this Spring, if someone had told me that Forster's and Caspian Terns would still be incubating eggs at the end of July, I would have looked at them askance. But after all, this is California, where the nesting season seems to take on a momentum of its own. Given the protracted state of our colonies' breeding progress, I will present here a simple update on SFBBO's Colonial Waterbird Program. But before I do that, I would just like to say that my first field season with SFBBO has been a thrill – from gaining new perspectives on the south bay's salt ponds and marshes, to getting to know the volunteers and staff of SFBBO. The people behind this organization make it what it is, and it is a pleasure to be working with such committed people.

Out at the Knapp we saw a substantial increase in the number of nesting California Gulls. On the May 8 colony count we tallied 4629 nests, up from 3281 nests in 1998. Across all south Bay colonies we counted a total of 6674 CAGU nests. These produced a minimum of 16842 eggs – which translates

into about 1.26 tons of eggs. All yolking aside – that's a lot of biomass! It is hard to say at this point why we are seeing such an increase in the number of CAGUs breeding in the south bay. Judging from the numbers of immatures and subadults in the area, there appear to be plenty of future breeders waiting for their chance to recruit into the population. It will certainly be very important to keep an eye on these colonies – particularly the Knapp, for someday the levee at the Knapp will be breached and the area returned to tidal wetlands. When this happens, it will be interesting to see where the gulls go to nest. A veritable armada of staff and volunteers returned to the Knapp on the Memorial Day weekend to band gull chicks in the "enclosure". For those of you who are not familiar with it, the enclosure is a corralled-in area of the Knapp that prevents chicks from running away (and into trouble!) when we go out to band. At any rate, the only trouble we ran into was the defensive parents dive-bombing the banders. Gulls have a knack for whacking one in the head, and Tom Ryan, our volunteer extraordinaire, was thrilled to have his hair parted by a California Gull on his birthday!



Forster's Tern banding team on an island at Turk in Union City. (Carlene Stoker)



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The Latest Tern of Events Cont.

Terning now to the other larids – compared to last year we have seen increases in the number of Forster's Tern nests at some colonies, while others have remained about the same. As intimated above, the real story is the protracted nesting season. Offhand, it looks like there may have been a substantial number of renesters this year. This, in tern, may explain the lengthy nesting season. At some of the colonies, such as at the EEC, about two-thirds of the eggs we initially counted disappeared. Thus, many of the terns that lost their eggs early on in the season may have attempted to renest. Why did the eggs and or chicks disappear? There are many possible reasons, but one hypothesis suggests that Black-crowned Night Herons could be making off with the terns's eggs. This will certainly be a very interesting situation to follow next season.

Thanks to our volunteers, who were always ready to go at a moment's notice, we made many visits to Forster's Tern colonies to band and measure chicks. This was not always an easy task. At Moffett, for instance, the water level in the ponds was so low and the mud so deep that we had to lay planks out over the mudflat just to launch the kayaks. Getting muddy is unavoidable – but it is nice to see people enjoying themselves in spite of it! We were able to band 355 FOTE chicks – a substantial increase over last year. Many of these chicks are now sporting color bands that identify them by colony and year.

The hybrid Forster's x Arctic Tern pair out at Hayward Shoreline produced three chicks this year, but by the time we went out to band them on July 14, only one remained. According to Bob Richmond, the female Arctic Tern nourished her remaining chick by pirating fish away from any and all Forster's Terns in the colony. This she would easily do, stuffing her chick regularly to the point where it would refuse her offerings. At banding we found this chick to be big and robust with long legs. Obviously, it did not inherit its mother's (Arctic Tern) legs. That same day we banded a Black-skimmer chick at the Hayward Shoreline. The adults gracefully zoomed past us giving that funny "wonk" cry of theirs.

The annual Caspian Tern banding trip to Brooks Island was successful. Lou Young kindly drove Sue Macias, Jordan Trigg (one of our interns), and the avon up to Richmond. Danielle Lefer and I met

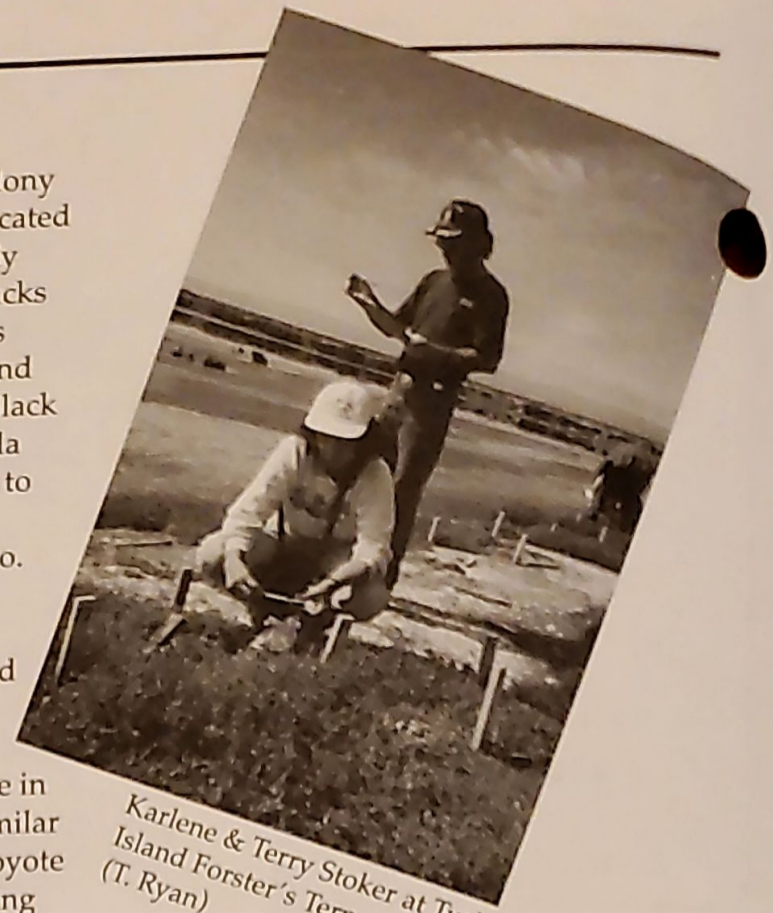
them there for the launching. The colony is large and, as a special attraction, located on a sandy beach (no mud!). It is truly amazing to see how much wildlife packs into the small, out of the way habitats around the Bay Area. On Brooks Island we were treated to sights of nesting Black Oystercatchers, Western Gulls, Canada Geese and White-crowned Sparrows, to name a few. Several groups of Surf Scoters were summering out there, too.

The heron and egret monitoring has revealed a fascinating mix of early and late nesters. Nancy DeStefanis reported successive nesting attempts of Great Blue Herons out at Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park. It looked like a similar event was going to transpire at the Coyote Creek herony, with Great Egrets moving into the Great Blue Heron colony after the herons left. But the egrets fizzled out in their attempts. We were very surprised to see the Mallard Slough heron and egret colony disperse so quickly after breeding. The Little Blue Herons associated with this colony were spotted several times in and around the south bay.

A final report will have to wait until the birds themselves decide to finish this nesting season. In the meantime, I wish to thank all of our volunteers for their unbridled enthusiasm and help with the Colonial Waterbird program. Whether you watched herons way up in the trees or scooted after wayward tern chicks, we could not have done it without you. Thank you.

Thanks to all of the following Colonial Waterbird Monitoring Program volunteers who monitored colonies and/or banded:

Janet Alexander, Deborah Bartens, Laurie Bechtler, Maren Bell, Karen Bergen, Dusty Bleher, Diana Bonogofsky, Jennifer Campbell, Dick and Pat Carlson, Robert Clement, Howard Cogswell, Laura Collins, Charles and Joan Coston, Robin Dakin, Susannah Dameron, Nancy DeStefanis, Jean Dubois, Kimi Fettke, Lee Franks, Christina Garcia and Marcelino Madrigal, Phil and Pat Gordon, Lorraine Grassano, Ira Greenberg, Nancy Harden, Howard Higley, Calvin Hom, Jodi Isaacs, Lyle Jumawan, Traci Kawakami, Diane Kodama, Barbara Lapp, Amy Lerner, Sue Macias, Peter Metropulos, Cheryl Millett, Anne Moser, George Oetzel, Sharon Parker, Jen Parkin, Vijay Ramachandran, Bob Richmond, Tom Ryan, Susan Sandstrom,



Karlene & Terry Stoker at Turk Island Forster's Tern colony. (T. Ryan)



SFBBO biologists Danielle LeFer & volunteer Deborah Bartens band a California Gull on the Knapp property, Alviso. (C. Millett)



Jennifer Campbell, Doug Bell & Kimi Fettke at the Alviso Forster's Tern colony. (S. Macias)

David Shaw, Julie Smith, Robin Smith, Phil Smith, Kar, Terry and Patches Stoker, Mark Sutherland, Renee Tate, Jordan Trigg, and Katherine Ulrich.

Salt Ponds and Birds, Part Three

In this issue, we reprint the conclusion of an article that originally appeared in *The Still* in September of 1986. Dave Lonzarich was a Research Associate of SFBBO and received his M.A. from San Jose State University in 1989, entitled "Temporal and spatial variations in salt pond environments and implications for fish and invertebrates". His observations of life supported in the ponds are still valid and well worth another read today, although as always, we encourage our readers to form their own conclusions.

SALT POND STUDY

By David Lonzarich

In the process of producing salt for human use, water is first brought in from the bay into an intake pond. From there it flows through a sequence of ponds (pumped or by gravity flow) in which there are progressive increases in salinity. It is this gradual change in salinity, that probably more than any other single factor influences the diversity, productivity, and complexity of life within a pond. The habitat of each pond is different from the one adjacent to it. The first pond in our study site, an important south bay refuge for pelicans and waterfowl, is populated by what may seem to be a rather surprising assortment of aquatic fauna. Fourteen species of fish and at least twenty species of invertebrates were found to inhabit this pond. Imagine my surprise when I began collecting leopard sharks, (very small and non-threatening), shiner surfperch, northern anchovy, starry flounder, English sole, staghorn sculpin, bat rays, topsmelt, longjaw mudsucker, and bay pipefish. Pipefish are my favorites: a beautiful and very unusual fish in that they look like a misplaced snake, but are, in fact, closely related to the familiar seahorse.

This first pond is rich in invertebrate life, unfortunately, like many of the invertebrates found in San Francisco Bay, the majority are introduced from other parts of the world. There are many species of crustaceans (shrimps, crabs, etc.), mussels, and other shellfish. Sea anemones, barnacles, and many different types of worms are also common. The abundant aquatic vegetation in the shallow waters is home for many forms of life as are the deeper channels of the borrow pits that form much of the shoreline of all of the ponds.

The first pond and the one immediately following it essentially function as enclosed bays or lagoons, even if man-made ones. Their salinities rarely exceed seawater concentrations. The waters are shallow and highly productive

supporting much of the marine and estuarine aquatic fauna which are found in the south San Francisco Bay. The diversity of species present is high throughout the year. Some fish and invertebrates that emigrate from the bay survive only short periods while others prevail and even seem to prosper in the face of a variety of extreme environmental conditions uncommon to the bay.

It is this abundance of life that provides the pelicans, terns, gulls, wading birds, grebes, and cormorants very important seasonal food resource. Breeding California Gulls, recent additions to the levees of this area, feed on the fauna, including rainwater killifish, a small fish very common to these ponds. Forster's Terns and Caspian Terns appear to feed on an assortment of pond fishes, including topsmelt, staghorn sculpin, killifish, longjaw mudsuckers, and 3-spined stickleback. Other fish-eating birds probably take some of the same fish as well.

During the winter, we have counted as many as 10,000 ducks on the first pond. Many of them may be feeding on the abundant aquatic plants and on the invertebrates found among the plants. These two ponds provide wintering ducks with one of the last remaining refuges in the bay.

As the water enters the third, fourth, and fifth ponds, the aquatic life undergoes dramatic changes. The water is no longer clear, but rather a characteristic green color. The aquatic plants and many of the fish and invertebrates which were abundant in the two preceding ponds have disappeared. There are no sharks, or perch, bat rays, or pipefish. Topsmelt appear to remain the most abundant fish, but the mudsucker now begins to take on a greater role in the fish community. The invertebrate community has also undergone a transition. Some of the crustaceans (barnacles and copepods) are still present, but invertebrate population is

dominated by the familiar brine shrimp. Not at all common in the first and second salt ponds, (probably because of competition with other invertebrates and predation by fish) this shrimp, along with waterboatmen from the insect family, have almost completely taken over. Life at the bottom of the ponds has also changed a great deal. Where there were many species of worms in the first two ponds, now there is only one species.

In these ponds, high salinities cause so many alterations of the aquatic communities that they become unique from any other environment in the bay. Water in the ponds beyond the second one is one to two times the salinity of seawater. Diversity and complexity have declined, yet productivity is still very high. The brine shrimp, feeding on the bacteria and the algae which color the water, the waterboatman, and the worms that inhabit the bottom have become a rich food source for the remaining fish. Collectively, the just-mentioned species feed yet another community of birds. Eared Grebes, phalaropes, Canvasbacks, gulls, several species of shorebirds, and, to a lesser degree, some fish-eating birds are now the characteristic avian residents.

By the time the water reaches the seventh pond, the salinity has surpassed tolerable limits for even the hardiest of fish. Brine shrimp, waterboatmen, and the benthic worms are still present and abundant. Fish-eating birds rarely use this pond, but phalaropes, Eared Grebes, and gulls are seasonally very abundant.

And so it goes. Beyond the boundaries of the study area there are at least eight more ponds in this series, gradually concentrating salts and thereby changing the composition of the aquatic and avian communities associated with them.

There are many of these salt pond complexes in the southern end of San Francisco Bay. Most of them now cover

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

The Results Are In

by Cheryl Millett

With your newsletter in June you received a membership survey to better help us provide you with the Bird Observatory of your dreams. We've received 58 surveys so far and the survey says (in Richard Dawson's voice):

Who We Are:

85% of our members are age 40 or greater, with 38% being in the 60+ region (some folks even wrote in 80+ categories!).

This is how respondents self-identified: 86% as birders, 79% as environmentalists, 67% as conservationists, 45% as community volunteers, 40% as outside types, 28% as recreation types, 16% as bird photographers, and only 7% as ornithologists. There were also several write-in categories, including an insect photographer, a dog owner, a herper, and one pain in the @#!.

What We Want:

In ranking SFBBO's activities, members clearly deemed scientific research SFBBO's most important. The two top-ranked choices were research on the San Francisco Bay's shorebirds and its marsh birds, followed by research on the bay's gulls and terns and waterbird colony monitoring. Following on their heels were waterbird disease prevention, banding passerines, banding waterbirds and local environmental issues. Research training, bird identification classes and field trips were a bit further down on the list, with local bird walks, speaker engagements and kayaking trips tagging along. A few people declined to rank activities, writing in that they were all important, or demurring because they are new members and don't think they are familiar enough with SFBBO to be opinionated about it (not so!). A few others wrote in that categorically they think research is

number one, with fundraising to support that research and education close behind.

There was less consensus in the ranking of SFBBO's product, except that fun took a bit of a back seat to more serious pursuits. Scientific publications, educating the public and participation in local issues all ended in a dead heat, closely followed by birding for enjoyment. Research was a popular write-in here as well.

The Sky's the Limit aka Suggested Changes if Money Were No Object:

A few members clamored for a San Francisco or north bay branch office. Several members are planning to volunteer more at SFBBO when they retire and would like us to keep their favorite projects going until then (*don't worry- if the project's informative we'll keep it going, especially if you sponsor it!*). One person suggested more free field trips and classes, while another asked for repeating classes for those who miss them the first time around (*we do!, so don't worry, you'll get another chance, and we also listen to suggestions for different classes as well*). One member would like to see a Sunday speaker series with potluck dinners for those who work all week, while another advocates for more Monday through Friday field trips and activities (*something for everyone!*). A couple of members would like to see SFBBO organize a conference or convention to bring together various northern California agencies concerned with the bay's birds (*or California's birds*). My personal dreamy favorite is the thought that SFBBO should move to beautiful new headquarters (*million-dollar stuff*) with museum, aviary, classrooms ...aaahhhh! Now to the task of making money no object!

Land Bird Banding at Coyote Creek

by Janet Hanson and Alvaro Jaramillo

Fall migration is approaching fast, and the staff and volunteers of SFBBO are making good progress on their project to renew and return the land bird banding program to a steady course.

The Site

A "thorough" clean up effort at the site might also have been accurately described as "exhaustive" or "sweeping". The interior of the banding trailer has reappeared from under a layer of dust. The white single-wide trailer will eventually be taken away by Wildlife Rescue of Silicon Valley, for use at their new site. Important data from Dr. Mewaldt's earlier research around the south bay was removed from one of the two smaller trailers before they were disposed of (one to a new home, the other not worthy of salvage). We anticipate moving the double-wide to Alviso in September. And we expect to secure access privileges from both the Water District and the City of San Jose in the next few weeks. Our gratitude to these Super Volunteers, in no particular order:

Vicki Silvas-Young, Gerry Ellis, Vic Monia (Grand Wizard of Expediency), Dick Carlson, Arlene Feng, Lou Young, Robin Smith

The Science

Now we get more good news. On July 30, Dr. C. J. Ralph visited the field station and reviewed our banding protocols, goals, philosophy and cobwebs. C. J. might well be called the "Dean of Banding", since he has been involved with banding since his days as a grad student under Dr. Mewaldt, and probably before that. He has been instrumental in developing the majority of banding protocols in use today. Some of the highlights of his comments:

- The Coyote Creek 10-plus-year data set is unique in its span of time and its inland riparian location.
- One of its major strengths is its consistency, a cornerstone of the Partners In Flight program.
- We can incorporate improvements that will update the program, without risking its quality.

Other advisors present that day included Scott Terrill and Steve Rottenborn. The meeting notes are being compiled and will be circulated to other banding advisors. Volunteer banding is currently underway



Mark Your Calendar
October 17
Annual Open House
Watch for details in the mail

on Wednesdays and Sundays, and may resume on a third day, once program review is complete.

The Source of Funding

Now we get the really good news. CCRS Executive Director Eddie Gilmartin, succeeded in securing a grant from the City of San Jose, as part of the Santa Clara Valley Watershed Management Initiative, known as the SCVWMI or just "WMI". Part of this grant will be used to conduct further research at the field station and to run comparable studies in other riparian areas, such as the Guadalupe River, Upper Penitencia Creek and San Francisquito Creek. These smaller watersheds have been selected by the WMI's Core Group for initial assessment. A research program which includes banding and comparative bird counts at Coyote Creek and other areas will contribute valuable information to the evaluation of the watershed's health. Thus, the Land Bird Banding Program at Coyote Creek has the basic financial support it needs to continue into the spring of 2000. Help SFBBO guarantee its future by supporting the team of your choice in our upcoming Fall Challenge event. Or better yet, field your own team and do a Big Day in your favorite county. Check with your employer for corporate sponsorship (\$500) or for a matching funds program. If need be, we can help you put together a team; you may even find yourself birding with some of our local elite! It's a great way and a FUN way to support SFBBO and its work to conserve the bay area's birds.



C. J. Ralph and Al Jaramillo look over a net lane at the Coyote Creek field station. (J. Hanson)

California
FALL CHALLENGE



California FALL CHALLENGE

September 18 – October 16, 1999

The California Fall Challenge is a state-wide birding event that:

- Explores the abundant natural diversity of California's 58 counties
- Celebrates the spectacular fall migration of 400 or more species down the Pacific Flyway
- Improves our knowledge of state-wide distribution of fall migrants
- Provides a competition for birders covering the entire Golden State and a fun way to support SFBBO and your favorite bird-related non-profit

Grand Prize and trophy awarded to the team spotting the highest percentage of a county's list. All you have to do to participate is pick your favorite county in California and form a dream team with your best birding friends. Return the enclosed registration form, pick your Big Day date and start planning your winning strategy.

Prizes include Leica Televid Spotting Scope with Zoom Lens. Gone Birding "Big Pockets" Outerwear and more.....

Every county in California is geographically and hence ornithologically unique, and you local birders know your counties like no one else. Other prizes go to most species in one county and for most species period (i.e., with no county limits), so consider your county and then give it some careful thought. A smaller list may mean that a high percentage of the total is the thing to shoot for. Or it may be better to bird a diverse county with a high total to get the most species. Or maybe a mountain-to-coast transect for a highest possible species total is more fun. It's your choice. And this could be your chance to hit a record California Big Day for September or October.

Your support of CFC helps fund the backbone of SFBBO - our monitoring and research projects that keep a close eye on the health of the Bay.

Visit our California Fall Challenge homepage at www.sfbbo.org

Birders' note: Check out the great article on the Fall Challenge in the latest issue of Birdwatcher's Digest, contributed by SFBBO member Ed Pandolfino.

Around the Bay

SFBBO's contributions to bayside events

TRIPS

Klamath and Tule Lake

This repeat of last year's spectacular trip will commence in the shadow of Mt. Shasta for another look for Black-backed Woodpecker. Continuing on to Butte Valley, we expect numerous birds of prey, including Ferruginous and Rough-legged hawks. The day finishes at Lower Klamath NWR for looks at Snow and Ross' geese, plus Tundra Swan and Sandhill Crane. On Sunday, we will check Tule Lake for wintering Bald Eagles, then conclude the trip at Lava Beds National Monument, searching for Pinyon Jays, Mountain Bluebird and Golden Eagle.

Date: October 22-24

Leaders: Tom Ryan and Gjon Hazard

Cost: Members \$60/Nonmembers \$75

Los Banos Area Wildlife Refuges

The Central Valley refuge complex plays hosts to millions of overwintering birds that depend on its system of managed wetlands. The area is well known for large numbers of wintering raptors, including Swainson's Hawks (8 in one tree!), Rough-legged Hawks, Prairie Falcons and Golden Eagles. The largest aggregation of Sandhill Cranes in California can also be found here. Meet early Saturday morning in Los Banos for a memorable search for waterfowl and shorebirds, including Long-billed Curlew and maybe Mountain Plover. Finish the day over an evening meal at one of the local Basque restaurants.

Date: Saturday, December 11

Leader: Dick Carlson

Cost: Members \$30/Nonmembers \$45

CLASSES

HawkWatch: the Fall Migration

Here in the Bay Area, we have access to one of the great migration observation spots on the West Coast. The Marin Headlands are the source of the great

thermal elevator that southbound raptors ride skyward before crossing the Gate. Joe will help us understand raptor identification, behavior, migration ecology and conservation, then lead us on a trip to the Hill during the height of fall migration.

Instructor: Joe DiDonato

Class meeting: Thursday, Sept. 30 & Oct. 7; 7:30 - 9:30 PM

Field trip: Sunday, October 10; 10 AM - 2 PM (bring a lunch); location: the Marin Headlands

Cost: Members \$40/Nonmembers \$55

Pelagic Birds of Monterey Bay

SFBBO Biologist Alvaro Jaramillo often leads pelagic trips out of Santa Cruz for Shearwater Journeys. Study in advance by viewing Debbie's excellent video on seabirds and marine mammals, and some additional slides. Join Al as he reviews the species you may spot and their field marks. Even if a pelagic trip is not in your future, feel free to join us in viewing this remarkable program.

Instructor: Alvaro Jaramillo

Class meeting: Thursday, September 16; 7:30 - 9:00 PM

Cost of evening preview: Members \$20/Nonmembers \$35

Field trip: Sunday, September 19

NOTE: Participants arrange their own passage through Shearwater Journeys (408) 637-8527

Salt Ponds Cont.

what were once many miles of salt marsh and slough habitats; because of the change from the historical habitat types, the value of salt ponds to wildlife and their effect on the bay ecology has been the center of some debate. There is little doubt that the ponds have benefited some birds (phalaropes, pelicans, and grebes). The levees that surround each pond provide habitat for numerous breeding bird colonies including species that have never bred in the south bay. Most notable of these birds are the California Gulls that have established colonies on these levees in recent years. Marsh habitat loss has probably proven detrimental to some bay wildlife, but from my work I have seen that salt ponds provide a different type of very productive and important habitat which benefit many estuarine fishes, invertebrates and birds.

I feel that we have pursued and uncovered a concealed treasure in the biology of the salt ponds. We have provided insights into the diversity, productivity, and complexity of life that lives beneath the surface of these waters. Today the ponds are no longer the mystery to me that they once were, but they retain a fascinating and consuming appeal. For me, every day of exploration of the salt ponds is a wonderful adventure.

1999 Slate of Board Members

Scott Terrill

As a current Board member of CCRS, Scott graciously agreed to complete his CCRS term on the SFBBO Board

Anne Moser

Anne is a current SFBBO Board member and Treasurer of the organization.

Gerry Ellis

Comes to us from the group of dedicated banders at CCRS.

David Ainley

Brings his reknown research expertise and experience to SFBBO.

Our thanks to these supporters of the Observatory....

Memberships

We welcome the following new and returning members of the SFBBO (May, June and July): Lyle Adams, Joyce Bartlett, Louis Beaudet, Walter Berger, Robert Berka, Robert & Marion Blau, Pete Bloom, Victor Bravo, Clarence Bruce, Ann Chiller, Cary Cochrell, Eva Coffin, Steve & Robin Dakin, Margaret De Staebler, Linda Elkind, Kimi Fettke, Ernie Goitein, Leda Beth Gray, Theresa Grieve, Marie Grubbe, Jean Halford, Denise Hamilton, Elaine Harding, Barbara Houghton, Jodi Isaacs, Deborah Jamison, Dorothy Johnson, Rich Kuehn, Jennifer Lally-Pettit, Nick Lethaby, Harold & Eleanor Lipton, Barbara Magnuson, Larry and Judie Manning, Helen Manning, Lester & Mary Manson, David McIntyre, Sam Mitchell, Robert & Dorothy Moore, Thomas Moutoux, Ellen Noble, Shelly Palmaffy, Jennifer and Bill Parkin, Don Peer, Donald & Diethild Price, Robert Reiling, E. Renzel, Jr., Laurel Rezeau, Allen Royer & Family, Byron & Elizabeth Ryono, Milton Seibert, Debbie Shearwater, Jane & Timothy Starbird, Jean Sutherland, John

Tikotsky, George & Marilyn Trabert, Anna Trachtenberg, Judith Wagner, Ph.D., Estelle Weiss, Nick & Kathleen Yatsko, John York

We also wish to welcome all of the new members who have transferred from CCRS, who are too numerous to mention individually, but are so valued to fail to mention.

Contributions

Our special thanks to these Contributors to the Observatory (May, June and July): Irene Beardsley, Mary Brezner, Steve & Robin Dakin, William and Stephanie Ferguson, Gregory Jaeck & Gail Fulbeck, Ernie Goitein, Dorothy Hunt, Helen Manning, Shelly Palmaffy, Vicki Silvas-Young, Robin W. Smith, Hazel Tilden, Zona Walcott & Ron Goldthwaite.

Bylaws Upgrade

The SFBBO bylaws have undergone an upgrade, reflecting the current status of SFBBO and allowing for future growth. Prior to our Annual Meeting in October, they will be available for review in the SFBBO office or you may request a copy be emailed to you by contacting Cheryl Millett at admin@sfbbo.org. Many thanks to Board Members Jan Hintermeister and Lou Young for tackling the legalese.

Wish List

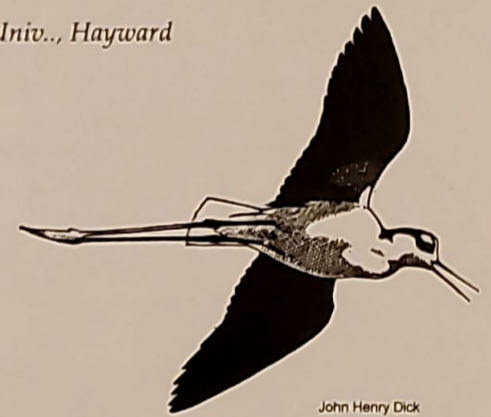
New bay-wide Thomas Bros. Map Book (not on cd)

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W. David Shuford - *Point Reyes Bird Observatory*
Scott Terrill, Ph.D. - *H. T. Harvey and Associates*
Nils Warnock, Ph.D. - *Point Reyes Bird Observatory*



John Henry Dick

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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SFBBO

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Website: www.sfbbo.org

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	Sustaining: \$200	Associate: \$50	Individual: \$25
Life: \$400	Contributing: \$100	Family: \$35	Student/Senior: \$15

Staff

Janet Tashjian Hanson
Executive Director
Cheryl Millett
Executive Assistant
Douglas A. Bell, Ph.D.
Senior Biologist
Alvaro Jaramillo
Senior Biologist
Robin Dakin
Biologist
Danielle LeFer
Biologist
Brian Ryckewaert
Biologist
Jesse Suckow
Biologist

1999 Research Interns

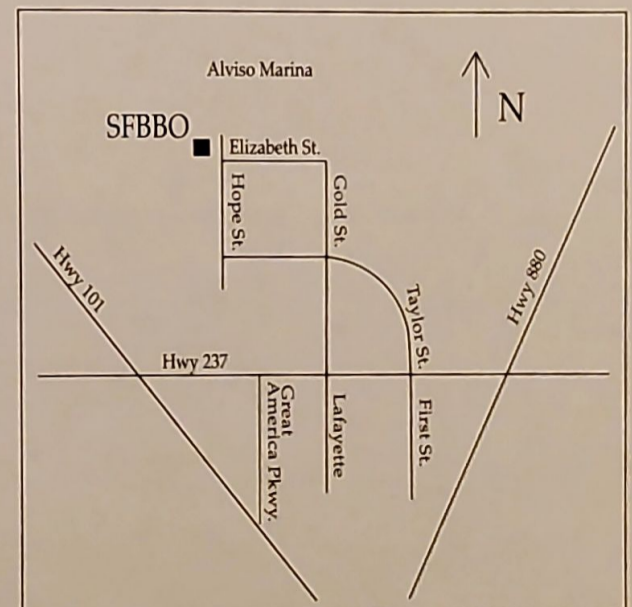
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Wine, Wildflowers, and Woodpeckers Weekend

by Richard Carlson

In June, the Sierras explode in birdsong and flowers as Spring rushes up the mountainsides. From June 11 through 13, ten SFBBO members observed this spectacle from Tahoe area roads and trails. Dick and Pat Carlson and Robin Smith opened up their Tahoe cabins to these birders. Some of the best birding was from Dick's deck overlooking the lake, where a flock of Cassin's Finches, Evening Grosbeaks, Red-breasted Nuthatches and Calliope Hummingbirds fought over the feeders. Birding started Friday afternoon at Donner State Park, where we found Western Tanagers, Western Wood-Pewees and a Black-backed Woodpecker. Friday's dinner and wine tasting was interrupted by two flying squirrels gliding in to their peanut butter feeders. The fanatics followed dinner with an owling expedition that bagged no owls but did find one very close and annoyed Porcupine.

This year's birding was limited by heavy, late snow. So we drove from near birdless Winter at 6,700 feet down to below 6,000 ft where Spring was in full control. Serious birding began early Saturday at the Donner cabin site where a pair of Snipe put on a breeding display in a nearby tree. Then we hiked down Sagehen Creek to see several Wilson's, Yellow and McGillivray's Warblers. Townsend's Solitaires, House Wrens, Western Tanagers, Cassin's Finches, Williamson's Sapsuckers and Brewer's Sparrows. The high point was at Stampede Reservoir where we found a flock of 20 Common Nighthawks flying low over the lakeside meadows. After the hike, we drove to Sierra Valley's wonderful marshes. The marsh area was already drying out, but there were still hundreds of Yellow-headed Blackbirds, nesting Avocet, Willet, Coot, Wilson's Phalarope, Black-necked Stilt, and flocks of White-faced Ibis. After diligently scoping the distant meadows, we found a Sandhill Crane, which rewarded our efforts by flying over the cars. On the drive back we saw many Horned Larks and a Sage Thrasher.

This long day's birding ended with some serious wine tasting and another Pat Carlson gourmet dinner back at the cabin. The flying squirrels put in a cameo appearance and everyone collapsed to bed by 10:30. Sunday morning we birded near the lake. We found Pygmy Nuthatches,

White-headed Woodpeckers and Common Mergansers. Black-backed Woodpeckers were on a nest near Alpine Meadows, along with Wilson's Warblers and Pine Siskins. Then we drove to Martis Lake where we found numerous and photogenic Green-tailed Towhees, Horned Larks, Brewer's Sparrows and a Vesper Sparrow.

Back at the cabin, we were treated to a gourmet brunch including the Carlson's traditional Swedish pancakes. No one went away hungry. While eating, we spotted a Northern Goshawk soaring below the cabin.

Altogether, we saw nearly 100 species, including several life birds for everyone. With nest locations having been found by the "recon" team of the Carlsons, Youngs and Oetzels the previous weekend, we had excellent looks at many spectacular birds.



Bill and Stephanie Ferguson minus the woodpeckers and the wildflowers. (R. Carlson)

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