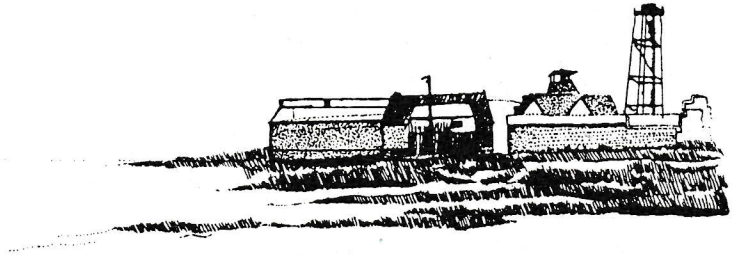
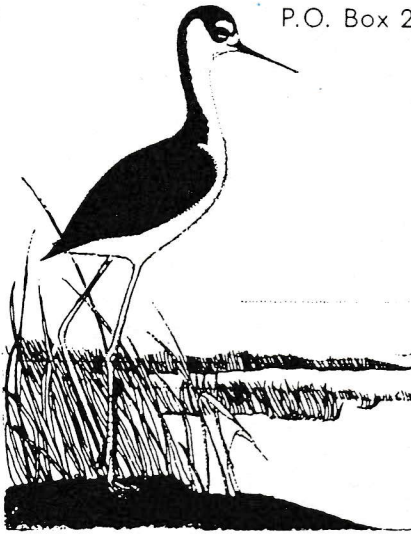


# SAN FRANCISCO BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 247, Alviso, Ca. 95002 • (408) 946-6548

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November/December 1990

## A PORTFOLIO FOR GIVING

by Don Starks

I suppose I'm like everyone else. I'm a picture composed of many different emotions at any one moment in time. At one moment I'm a liberal Democrat and the next I'm a Marine sergeant. The same may be said of how your station in life changes your outlook on the whereabouts of your pocketbook. Here I am 45 years old and only recently have my wife Carol and I started on that fantastic journey called parenthood. In addition we bought our first house two years ago this Christmas. You old timers in the crowd know how being a parent and homeowner really changes your views on family finances. That means spend more for the future and less to the here and now. More planning and less spontaneity. I'm doing things now I never dreamed I would ever find interesting; reading Money magazine, studying prospectus of a variety of mutual funds, and drafting a will. As you get even further down the line you may eventually reach the point where you have an honest to goodness portfolio. You know, stocks, bonds, limited partnerships, etc.

Well, just recently I had an interesting discussion with Lorie Call, a Senior Software Engineer with Logic Modeling, who suggested that I write this article. A portfolio for giving. Sounds ridiculous, but just ponder one simple and astonishing fact. In the greater San Francisco Bay Area there are over 10,000 charitable (non profit ????) organizations. Where would you be if during each year you have only one dollar to each one? Up to your ears in debt on postage let alone a lot of newsletters. I can't afford it plus I feel a certain amount of guilt when I say no to any organization. Remember, I'm the Director at the Bird Observatory so I know what it's like to be on the receiving end of negative responses.

So, what did I do. I took "stock" of my interests and planned a diversified approach. My main interest is nature and the environment, so I divided my interests on a global scale. I have international, national, local, and special interests. I'm a member of quite a few organizations many of which I consider business expenses, so I'm going to keep this on a charitable level only. In fact, I may omit some groups to which I give, strictly for the sake of brevity. On an international level I support the World Wildlife Fund and the International Program of the Nature Conservancy. On a national level I support the Nature Conservancy and Zero Population Growth. On a local level I support the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, Santa Clara County Breeding Bird Atlas, Coyote Creek Riparian Station, the California Academy of Sciences among others whom I'm sure will be insulted by my lack of a mention.

Now how about this strategy. Many of you know larger national organizations may have local chapters. Maybe you want to support the local chapter, but not the national. How can you do that? You can subscribe to the newsletter (if they have one) and donate directly to the local chapter. Believe me, they will be extremely pleased to get the money. I do just that with more than one organization.

So where does that place the groups I call the special interests? These are your personal pet projects or organizations. With me they include: Arizona Nature Conservancy, Santa Cruz Bird Club, Pro Esteros, California Native Plant Society, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Elkhorn Slough Foundation, Nonprofit Development Center, Save Our South Bay Wetlands, and others.

Continued on page 4

# Getting To Know The Salt Marsh Yellowthroat

## (*Geothlypis trichas sinuosa*)

by Karen Raby

The Salt Marsh Yellowthroat is a sub-species of the Common Yellowthroat and is endemic to the San Francisco Bay area. It relies year round on the salt marsh and riparian habitats around the Bay as far north as Olema and south into Santa Clara County. The disappearance of over 75% of San Francisco Bay wetlands through diking and filling combined with current environmental pressures on virtually all remaining bay habitat, has left fragmented populations of Salt Marsh Yellowthroats and increased concern for their continued survival. Currently the Salt Marsh Yellowthroat is recognized as a species of special concern in California, and is a federal candidate for endangered species status.

Although described as a sub-species as early as 1906 (Grinnell) and recognized as such by the American Ornithologist's Union, there has been no reliable method to physically distinguish the Salt Marsh Yellowthroat from other races by size or color. Consequently the Salt Marsh Yellowthroat has not yet been granted full endangered species status. In addition, little is known about specific habitat requirements for these birds, making successful management in remaining wetland habitats difficult.

These two facts raise some serious questions of how to ensure the survival of this small warbler. Sponsored by SFBBO and the San Francisco Bay Wildlife Refuge, and working under the auspices of the California Academy of Sciences, I began to look at factors which would hopefully prove valuable in the conservation management of the Salt Marsh Yellowthroat.

First, how could the Salt Marsh Yellowthroat be easily distinguished from the other two races they seasonally come in contact with? Considerable evidence has shown that many other bird species exhibit song dialects which can act as reliable identifiers (Baptista); why not the Salt Marsh Yellowthroat too? Between June and September 1990 I began to catalogue male Yellowthroat songs within part of the San Francisco Bay Wildlife Refuge. SFBBO President Paul Noble provided field recording expertise in

capturing male songs on tape. The preliminary catalogue of syllables and phrases of the Salt Marsh Yellowthroat song created this season has given some indication of the kind of song learning we had hoped for. Next year these songs will be compared to other Salt Marsh Yellowthroats and the songs of other California sub-species in an effort to find out if Salt Marsh Yellowthroats can be identified by their song dialects.

Second, since the Salt Marsh Yellowthroat is a local, nonmigratory race dependent on wetland habitat which has been greatly reduced in size, it is important that remaining marsh habitat be managed to enhance the reproduction and survival of these birds. Yellowthroats are highly insectivorous, but no detailed studies have ever been done pertaining to their feeding ecology. What do they eat? And is any insect food type more important to rearing young than another? In asking these questions, I found that before they could be answered I needed to find out what arthropods were living in the brackish marsh habitat where Yellowthroats were known to breed. Using several trapping techniques I

sampled arthropod populations for two months between June and August 1990 at a site where Yellowthroats were breeding. When and where possible I sampled from sites where the birds were observed to be feeding. The resulting relative entomology survey has provided a base for future studies examining the feeding patterns of Yellowthroats in more detail, the ultimate goal being better ecological management for this species and its wetland habitat.

The results from these preliminary field studies certainly indicate the importance of more research. Determining Yellowthroat song patterns and similarities may prove to be an identification tool for distinguishing populations of *G. t. sinuosa* from other Yellowthroat species. The continuation of this portion of the study next year should provide some exciting data and may provide influential information for the process of petitioning *G. t. sinuosa* to be recognized and classified as endangered at both the federal and state levels. ■



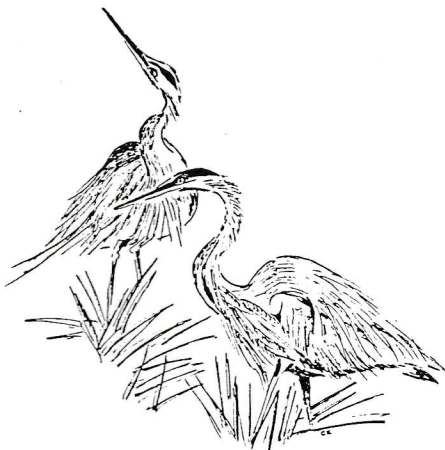
## **BIRDERS FORUM**

Dr. Tod Highsmith of the Manomet Bird Observatory (MBO) has recently contacted me concerning a new project that they and other bird organizations in the Northeast have started called the MBO Birders Forum. The Forum's first project is an immediate drive to collect used binoculars and spotting scopes to send to field biologists and grassroots organizations in Latin America, where a lack of basic equipment often frustrates research and conservation efforts. The overriding need for this work in Central and South America is based on the decline in certain populations of birds in North America that spend at least some of their year in Central and South America. As with most animals, migrant birds do not recognize political borders. We need to know more about the complete life histories of these birds as well as what is happening to their habitat in other countries. A few of the organizations that have requested the Forum's help are Pronatura (Mexico), Fundacion Natura (Ecuador), Ornithological Society of Bogota (Colombia), Asociacion Ornitologica Del Plata (Argentina), and Red Chilena de Aves Playeras (Chile). This last group should be of much interest to us here in the Bay Area. They perform work on shorebirds in Argentina that is similar in nature to our Knapp Project.

If you happen to have an old pair of binoculars or bird guide that you are willing to donate, you can contact the MBO Forum at the Manomet Bird Observatory, P. O. Box 936, Manomet, MA 02345 (508) 224-6521.

## **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

The annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count will be held on Sunday, December 23. The Bird Observatory will again organize the Alviso section this year. If you are new to Christmas Bird Counts, or a new birder, please don't let that stop you from this fun filled day. Both novices and experienced birders are needed. We guarantee an exciting day. The final tally for the complete count circle will be given at a dinner held immediately following the count. If you are interested in helping in the Alviso section, call Jean Dubois, section leader, at (408) 395-4264 for more details.

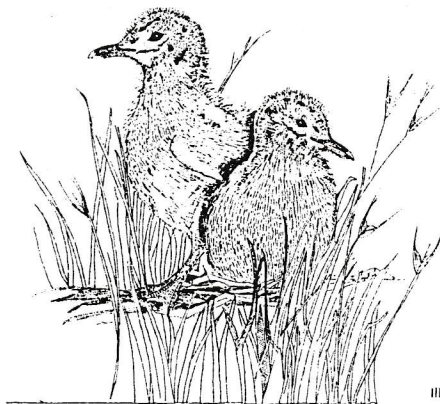


## **THE KNAPP STUDY**

This five year project investigates seasonal and annual affects of water chemistry and water levels on bird use within four salt evaporation ponds located in the South San Francisco Bay. These 1600 acres of ponds are important for migrating and wintering shorebirds. Indeed, 75% of the total number of shorebirds counted during the PRBO fall 1988 Shorebird Census were found in the South Bay, and a majority of those birds were on these four ponds. A grant from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has enabled us to purchase equipment necessary for this project as we continue to better understand how changing conditions affect bird populations residing in and migrating through this pond system.

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

Sunday,	November 18
Sunday,	December 2
Sunday,	December 16
Sunday,	December 30
Sunday,	January 13
Sunday,	January 27
Sunday,	February 10
Sunday,	February 24



Illustrations by Terry Hart

## **SFBBO Annual Meeting**

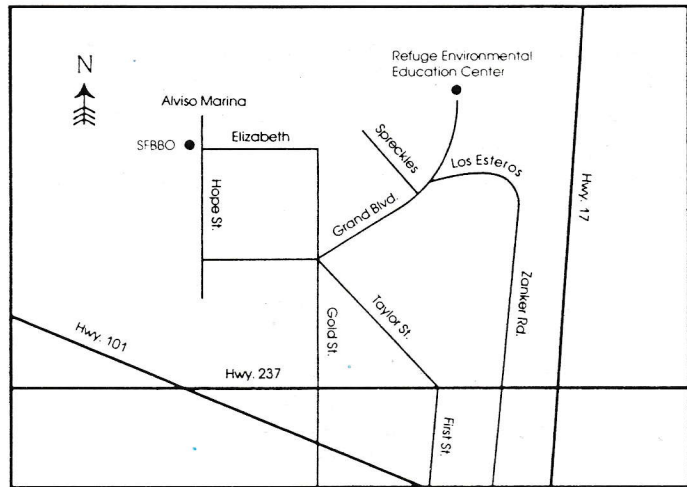
Join SFBBO staff, volunteers and members for the biannual General Membership Meeting held on Tuesday, December 4 at the Refuge Environmental Education Center in Alviso. (see map). The program will start at 7:30 with a short meeting for those who will be participating in the Alviso section of the Audubon Christmas Bird Count. The guest speaker will be Diane Kopeck who will talk about Harbor Seals of the San Francisco Bay. The SFBBO staff and volunteers will then report on projects that have been going on at the Bird Observatory this past year. So please join us for refreshments and an enjoyable evening.

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 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.**



## A PORTFOLIO FOR GIVING Cont.

Where does the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory fit in on all this? On the local level I almost consider it my number one special interest group. To be honest, the Observatory and the Nature Conservancy get the bulk of my donations.

I want to emphasize that the list that I have named was only a partial one on purpose. It's a pretty personal thing to donate time, money, and effort to a group. I don't like to expose my portfolio to everyone. I hope this has been or will be of some aid to you in the future when you are overwhelmed by requests for donations. Also, remember that as time moves on that your views also change and that should be exhibited in a change in your "portfolio of giving". We here at the observatory are of course always hoping that you continue to keep us in your portfolio and give a potential new member a hot tip so they too can make an "investment" in the future.

## CHRISTMAS WISH LIST

Since its inception members support has been a key factor in the Bird Observatory's success. Without it we could not carry out the important research projects that help us to understand the wildlife of the San Francisco Bay. Below is the Bird Observatory's Christmas Wish List for this year. Since SFBBO is a non-profit organization, your donation is tax deductible. Please help make the wishes we all share for the birds and the environment of the Bay continue to come true.

- |                          |                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Wild Bird Seed           | Computer Paper      |
| Camera - 35mm            | LifeJackets         |
| Spotting Scope           | Electric Typewriter |
| Binoculars               | Walkie Talkie       |
| 15 hp boat motor         | Folding Chairs      |
| Copy Machine             | Rubber Boots        |
| Waders                   | Computer Disks      |
| Library Books & Journals | Laser Printer       |
| Rain Gear                |                     |

## Donations

SFBBO would like to thank Lockheed for their donation of a used Sharp SF-850 copy machine.

We would also like to thank Marine Science Institute for their donation of a Savin 840 copy machine.

### San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

P.O. Box 247  
1290 Hope Street  
Alviso, CA 95002  
408-946-6548

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

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

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



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

\* Single payment becomes part of an endowment fund.

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