

SAN FRANCISCO BAY
BIRD OBSERVATORY

ANNUAL REPORT 2010



“We envision a San Francisco Bay Area where conservation issues are understood and land-use decisions are made based on science, resulting in healthy wild bird populations and the ecosystems in which they live.”

— San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory Vision adopted by the Board of Directors in July 2010

Our Human Connections

As we look back on 2010, we realize that it was a pivotal year in the 30 year history of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO). We keep coming back to one theme that ties it all together for us, and that’s Human Connections. While our scientists focus their binoculars on our local bird populations, the leadership of our organization is increasingly dedicated to nurturing the personal connections that make our study of bird populations possible. Collaborations and personal relationships are fundamental to our mission. As you know, much of our work is very labor intensive. It centers around monitoring birds as they migrate through or breed in the habitats throughout the Bay Area. Whether that involves banding birds at the Coyote Creek Field Station, counting California Gulls at the various landfills, or monitoring Snowy Plover nest success amidst the progress of the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project, the studies involve one common theme – YOU. It is largely because of you that we can carry out our mission and conduct scientific research in the Bay Area.

The data that we gather informs land managers in the region and allows them to make land use decisions that will benefit the bird populations in the Bay Area, the ecosystems that those birds depend on, and ultimately all of the humans that reside here, too. This work would not be possible without our amazing membership. Our members devote thousands of hours year after year to our mission and magnify the ability of our organization to positively affect conservation in the Bay Area.

In 2010, we amplified our efforts to communicate the results of our science programs to our membership. That is, we strove to tell you our story. Every week we asked ourselves the questions: 1) Who cares about our work, 2) What impact are we having, 3) How is our work relevant, and 4) Are we telling this effectively to everyone who needs to

know? By answering these questions we hope to inform you, and to inspire you to continue to support SFBBO. We hope this resonated with you, and we would love to hear from you about better ways to keep you informed in the future.

All of our programs, whether 30 years old or three years old, share something in common: partnerships. We do not work in isolation, and, in order to achieve our mission, we can’t. Our partners include land owners and managers, researchers, planners, conservationists, regulators, and restoration specialists. You all do important and vital work on the ground to improve the quality of our Bay Area environments, and our understanding of Bay Area ecosystems. You enrich the lives of Bay Area residents. We take pride in working with you – and especially in providing sound science to inform the work that you do. It is through these partnerships that we can take the scientific research and monitoring results, and translate it to management actions, conservation programs, or larger scientific efforts.

As we close out 2010, and formally enter into our 30th year, we want to thank you more than ever. You are the reason that we continue our work researching the bird populations of the Bay Area. We look forward to another 30 years by your side, watching Snowy Plovers recover in the South Bay Area, witnessing the return of tidal wetlands, and continuing to protect the terrestrial habitats that support one of the most diverse ecosystems on the planet.



TROY RAHMIG



JILL BLUSO DEMERS

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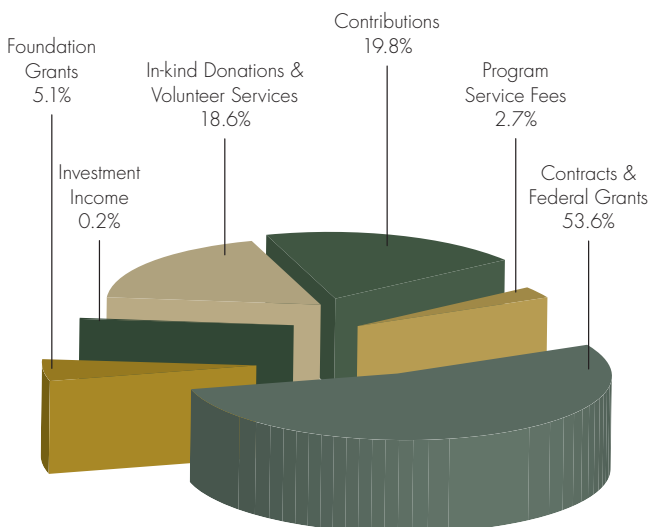
Statement of Financial Position

FISCAL YEARS ENDING DECEMBER 31	2010	2009
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 156,650	\$ 172,034
Contract & grants receivable	\$ 50,117	\$ 61,612
Prepaid expenses	\$ 10,781	\$ 7,259
Investments	\$ 1,851	\$ 54,248
Property and equipment	\$ 18,604	\$ 29,596
Total Assets	\$ 238,003	\$ 324,749
LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable & accrued expenses	\$ 8,670	\$ 5,046
Accrued compensation	\$ 21,732	\$ 12,634
Total Liabilities	\$ 30,402	\$ 17,680
Net Assets		
Undesignated	\$ 176,387	\$ 195,504
Board designated	\$ 30,611	\$ 90,000
Unrestricted	\$ 206,998	\$ 285,504
Temporarily restricted	\$ 603	\$ 21,565
Total Net Assets	\$ 207,601	\$ 307,069
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 238,003	\$ 324,749

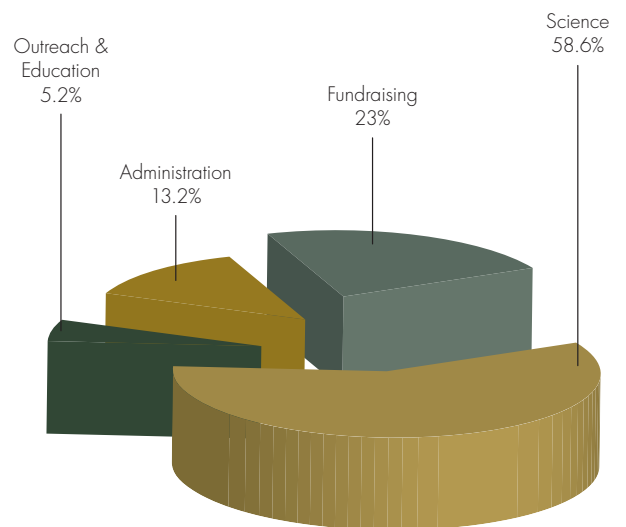


WILLIAM F. WALKER

Revenue 2010



Expenses 2010



2010 Science Programs



REBECCA JACKREI

SNOWY PLOVER RECOVERY

The Western Snowy Plover is a federally threatened species and SFBBO has monitored populations and reproductive success since 2003. The San Francisco Bay Snowy Plovers experienced low reproductive success in 2010. We continued monitoring the experimental oyster shells plots we spread in 2008 with the hopes that the shells would provide camouflage and increase the nest success in the plots. Although we observed an increase in nest success in the 2009 breeding season, in 2010 there was no difference in the success of nests in the shells compared with those outside of the plots. Using remote nest camera monitoring systems, we captured California Gulls, grey fox and a Ruddy Turnstone depredating plover nests.

COYOTE CREEK FIELD STATION

Riparian habitats support rich bird communities, but in California, this habitat has been dramatically reduced from historic levels. The Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) is located in the largest remaining riparian forest in the highly urbanized Silicon Valley. At CCFS, SFBBO staff and volunteers band birds, allowing us to track avian response to restoration and urbanization, and to document long-term demographic trends. Since 1982, over 114,000 individual birds of 170 species have been banded, including recaptured birds. We have over 187,000 total capture records. In 2010, we captured over 2,072 individual birds of 53 species. Thirty-one volunteers spent 3,000 hours in 2010 collecting this data, which SFBBO shares with researchers from universities and other organizations to facilitate local and regional analysis of avian data.



BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK

BRUCE FINOCCHIO

COLONIAL WATERBIRD MONITORING

This is our oldest program. Our team of volunteer citizen scientists monitored nesting herons, egrets, terns, gulls and cormorants for the 29th straight year! In 2010, we observed an increase over the previous year in the number of nesting Double-crested Cormorants, Forster's Terns, and California Gulls and stable nesting populations of Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets. We also documented a dramatic decrease in the number of nesting Caspian Terns in the South Bay, and a decline in Snowy Egrets. Our monitoring data is shared with partners such as Audubon Canyon Ranch, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game, and the Santa Clara County Department of Parks and Recreation.



GREAT EGRET

ROBERT HEIL

CALIFORNIA GULL MONITORING AND RESEARCH

SFBBO biologists and volunteers counted over 46,000 nesting California Gulls in the San Francisco Bay in 2010 – an increase of nearly 3,000 gulls from 2009. We also color-banded 600 California Gull adults and chicks at the South Bay Pond A6 colony – the largest California Gull colony, with 23,000 gulls – in order to track their future movements after the pond was restored to tidal action in collaboration with USGS. This work builds upon a 27-year California Gull banding dataset maintained by SFBBO from 1983 to 2010, in which over 11,000 California Gulls have been banded.

AVIAN USE OF SALT PONDS

In 2010, SFBBO continued to conduct bird surveys and water quality monitoring in 22 salt evaporation ponds

owned by the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, and managed for salt production by Cargill Salt. In 2010, we observed 325,124 birds of 83 species during our surveys. We found water quality parameters, such as salinity and dissolved oxygen levels, often dictate bird distributions, likely through the distribution of prey items within the ponds. We share these data with the Refuge, Cargill Salt, USGS, and the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project to aid in pond management, restoration, and bird conservation.

AVIAN RESPONSE TO URBAN RIPARIAN RESTORATION

In 2010, we completed a 2-year study assessing the potential benefits of urban riparian creek restoration in Contra Costa County, California to riparian-associated birds. SFBBO teamed up with the nonprofit Urban Creeks Council, an organization that restores riparian habitats, to compare bird populations in 5 restored and 5 unrestored riparian habitats. Over 2 years, we detected 63 unique species using these urban riparian habitats, with 19 species breeding in these areas. We found that these riparian habitats serve an important role as stopover habitat for migrating birds, as well as breeding habitat for resident species.



OAK TITMOUSE

BRUCE FINOCCHIO

AVIAN RESPONSE TO GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT

Grassland birds are declining, and less than 40% of historic grassland habitat remains in California. Grasslands support a unique suite of bird species, but relatively little is known about the distribution of those species or their response to grassland management such as prescribed burns, grazing, or mowing. In 2010, SFBBO continued bird surveys at Russian Ridge and Monte Bello Open Space preserves. (owned and managed by Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District), to determine avian response to prescribed burns in these grasslands. In 2010, we observed 49 species of birds, and found 14 of those species only in the burn areas, including grassland-obligate Grasshopper Sparrows, Savannah Sparrows, and Western Meadowlarks. This study began in 2009 and will continue through 2013.



CALIFORNIA QUAIL

MIKE MAMMOSE

AVIAN DISEASE PREVENTION PROGRAM

In 1982, SFBBO began surveying the South Bay sloughs to detect and prevent outbreaks of avian botulism. In 2010, we continued this work, monitoring three South Bay sloughs. We are pleased to report that our biologists and team of volunteers did not find any evidence of an avian botulism outbreak in the South Bay sloughs in 2010.

2010 Selected Publications

Ackerman, J., M. Herzog, C. Eagles-Smith, and J. Bluso-Demers. 2010. *California Gull Intrusions on Breeding Waterbird Colonies and Impacts to Reproductive Success: Implications for the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project*. Final Report. Prepared for U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Newark, CA.

Barton, G., J. Demers, and J. Scullen. 2010. *Bird Response to Fire in Grasslands of Russian Ridge Preserve*. Summary Report. Prepared for Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, Los Altos, CA.

Bluso-Demers, J.D., J.T. Ackerman, and J.Y. Takekawa. 2010. *Colony Attendance Patterns by Mated Forster's Terns using an Automated Data-logging Receiver System*. *Ardea* 98: 59-65.

Bluso-Demers, J., and J. Scullen. 2010. *Bird Use of Urban Riparian Restoration Sites in Contra Costa County, California, 2009-2010*. Final Report. Prepared for Urban Creeks Council, Berkeley, CA.

Robinson-Nilsen, C., and J. Demers. 2010. *Gull Abatement Surveys at Newby Island Landfill, 2007-2009*. Final Report. Prepared for Republic Services, Inc., Milpitas, CA.

Robinson-Nilsen, C., and J. Demers. 2010. *Cargill Salt Pond Waterbird Surveys Report, 2009-2010*. Final Report. Prepared for U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Newark, CA.

Robinson-Nilsen, C., J. Demers, and C. Strong. 2010. *Western Snowy Plover Numbers, Nesting Success, Fledging Success and Avian Predator Surveys in the San Francisco Bay, 2010*. Final Report. Prepared for U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Endangered Species Program, Sacramento, CA.

Robertson, E., and C. Robinson-Nilsen. 2010. *Avian Disease Prevention Program Monitoring in Artesian and Alviso Sloughs, June-November 2010*. Final Report. Prepared for City of San Jose, Environmental Services Department, San Jose, CA.

Robertson, E., and C. Robinson-Nilsen. 2010. *Avian Disease Prevention Program Monitoring in Guadalupe Slough, June-November 2010*. Final Report. Prepared for City of Sunnyvale, Sunnyvale, CA.

Tokatlian, K., C. Robinson-Nilsen, and J. Demers. 2010. *Colonial Waterbird Nesting Summary for the South San Francisco Bay, 2010*. Final Report. Prepared for Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Newark, CA.

Reaching Out

Is the general public informed and inspired by our work? We have discovered that the Bay Area can't get enough of the wonders of the bird world. Throughout the year, we created opportunities for people to walk and learn with us, and the response was nearly overwhelming. Some examples of our education and outreach activities in 2010:

- Biologist Alvaro Jaramillo hosted 6 separate 12-hour adult education workshops: Gulls, Raptors, Migration, Bird Song, Shorebirds, and Sparrows. In this high-quality series, nearly every class was full with a waiting list.
- Our Coyote Creek Field Station was center stage for quarterly tours and bird banding demonstrations led by Biologist Josh Scullen for youth groups, college students and the general public.
- In collaboration with Bay Area Ridge Trail Council and San Francisco Bay Trail, we produced the Birding the Carquinez Scenic Loop Trail Map. Once it was ready to distribute, we were immediately flooded with requests from the public to guide their visits to this Bay Area biodiversity hot spot. This guide raises awareness of new public areas in which critical habitat has been conserved, and sets the stage for us to host science-based walks starting in 2011.
- To satisfy the public's increasing requests for bird news and education we hired Director of Outreach and Communication, Stephanie Ellis, to create and implement our education and outreach initiatives.

Additional Collaborations

Here is a brief description of the other projects SFBBO has collaborated on in 2010.

OILED WILDLIFE CARE NETWORK

In 2010, SFBBO became a member organization of the Oiled Wildlife Care Network, a state-wide collective of organizations working towards oil spill response, rescue, rehabilitation and research. Six of SFBBO's biologists and volunteers underwent extensive training to recover oiled wildlife in the event of an oil spill.

PACIFIC FLYWAY SHOREBIRD SURVEYS

Fifteen SFBBO volunteers and staff members joined PRBO Conservation Science, USGS, Audubon California, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct the annual Pacific Flyway Shorebird Survey. This survey is designed to guide management and conservation of shorebirds along the Pacific Flyway. SFBBO surveyed many of the former salt evaporation ponds and marshes along the edges of the South Bay as part of the Bay-wide survey effort.

RIPARIAN MERCURY BIOACCUMULATION

In 2010, the San Francisco Estuary Institute launched a study focused on mercury accumulation in Song Sparrows and other passerines in riparian habitats in the Bay Area. SFBBO conducted the field work in the South Bay, capturing and banding birds from 9 different riparian habitats, from Gilroy to Half Moon Bay. The data include the first measures of accumulated mercury levels for previously unstudied species, and are currently in the process of being analyzed.



THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY *is dedicated to the conservation of birds and their habitat through science and outreach.*

Donors

Thank you to our donors, funders, and partners. Our work would not be possible without your generous support.

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