

The Stilt

Fall 2003

SAN FRANCISCO BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY NEWSLETTER

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

PONDS, NOT SALT PONDS

What's in a name? Shakespeare wanted us to see there was no real difference between a Capulet and a Montague. But in the case of "salt ponds," a real modern war of words could erupt over the use of the very term.

In 1994, groups of Bay Area scientists convened to begin development of what would eventually become the Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals report. I freely admit to a high degree of skepticism: long drives to Richmond or Vallejo seemed to net me long hours in circular meetings. But over the next four years, the group of waterbird experts I was privileged to work with became known as card-carrying pond advocates. SFBBO was now among other organizations that recognized the importance of the present-day salt pond habitat to the millions of shorebirds and waterfowl that migrate through and winter on the South Bay's pond system. And we pushed back hard when presented with South Bay goal maps that were entirely tidal marsh.

We were clearly in the minority position. For one thing, there was no salt pond sale on the horizon at all. This made the whole process feel as if we were designing Never-never Land. Since nearly all the Bay's tidal marsh has been filled or degraded in some manner during the last 150 years, we offered no opposition to the notion that re-establishing marsh habitat should be our highest priority.

Indeed we all do dream of vast unbroken expanses of marsh and a return of the abundant wildlife that once teemed in the South Bay. Natural salt pans occurred in the higher marsh; after high tides, some salt water would remain trapped in pools to eventually evaporate, creating a source of salt crystals for the Ohlone Indians and native mammals. Enterprising humans figured out how to harvest salt for sale, leading to the creation of artificial ponds in the marsh, and bang, next thing you know, there are 30,000 acres of ponds in south San

Continued on page 2



VICKI JENNINGS

In this issue:

- 1 *Ponds, Not Salt Ponds*
Director's Corner
- 2 *Partners In Flight*
- 3 *Needle in a Haystack*
- 4 *How are birds adapted to flight?*
- 6 *Flamingos in the North Bay*
- 8 *The Tern of Events*



MONICA LUNDY

The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of birds and their habitats through research, monitoring and educational activities.

SFBBO

San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory
P.O. Box 247 1290 Hope Street Alviso, CA 95002



A lone Yellowlegs (sp.) surveys a Baylands pond. Many of the numerous shallow salt water impoundments originally created for salt production now provide valuable habitat for certain birds. Photo Courtesy of Scott J. Norton.

PHOTO BY SCOTT J. NORTON WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

PONDS NOT SALT PONDS

Continued from page 1

Francisco Bay. Well, actually the big bang took 100 years to come about, a gradual shift of mud and water. And at the same blur of time, upland habitat became air-fields, dumps, freeways, pasture and agricultural fields. And there happened an equally gradual shift by birds to accommodate the changes, as best as they could. In particular, our millions of migratory shorebirds now use the ponds as upland high-tide refugia because there are few other choices, often limited to landfills.

My team of renegade pond pushers succeeded in convincing other Goal-makers of the need to retain pond habitat, but my own hackles rise every time we continue to use the term "salt pond" to describe this habitat. Of course, we insiders know that we don't really mean "salt pond," since they will no longer be managed to produce salt; we really mean "a shallow impoundment of salt water with managed water levels." But it sure is easier to say salt pond and my feeling is that it confuses the general public like mad.

Let's keep our eyes on good science, the birds and the habitats they need for survival.

~ Janet Hanson

Executive Director, SFBBO

Recent SFBBO publication: C. Rintoul, N. Warnock, G. Page and J. Hanson. *Breeding status and habitat use of Black-necked Stilts and American Avocets in south San Francisco Bay.* *Western Birds* 34: 2-14; 2003.



Many of the South Bay's salt ponds will be part of the restoration effort. But how much will be tidal marsh and how much will remain wildlife-suitable salt ponds?

Partners In Flight

Have you ever heard about an organization called **Partners In Flight** (PIF; also known as *Companeros en Vuelo* and *Partenaires d'Envol*)? The founding of this organization in 1990 grew out of the concern for the decline in populations of many landbird species, especially neotropical migrants (birds that breed in North America and winter in Central and South America). Since then the focus has grown to include most landbirds and other bird species requiring terrestrial habitats. The objective of Partners in Flight is to "keep common birds common" in this hemisphere by combining, coordinating, and increasing the resources of public and private organizations studying birds in North and South America. PIF is a voluntary and cooperative effort involving partnerships among state and federal agencies, professional organizations, conservation groups, philanthropic foundations, industry, the academic community, and private individuals.

The goal of PIF is to focus resources on improving monitoring and inventory, research, management, and education programs involving birds and their habitats. This is done by encouraging cooperation between the public and private sectors in the Western Hemisphere. One result of PIF efforts has been for each state or region to produce Bird Conservation

Plans (BCPs), documents that set priorities and establish objectives for conservation, and give recommendations for how to accomplish and evaluate these objectives.

The California chapter of Partners In Flight was estab-

lished in 1992 and has completed Bird Conservation Plans (BCPs) for six habitats and bioregions – *Riparian, Oak Woodlands, Coastal Scrub and Chaparral, Grasslands, Coniferous Forests, and the Sierra Nevada Bioregion*. The *Desert Bioregion* BCP is in the works, and the next statewide meeting will be held in the Mojave region of California in November of 2003, with a focus on desert bird conservation.

Members of SFBBO actively serve on California Partners In Flight's Executive Steering Committee and the Research and Monitoring Working Group. In March of 2002 we presented posters representing SFBBO's landbird and waterbird research at the Third International Partners In Flight Conference at the Asilomar Conference Center in Pacific Grove. It was exciting to see so many different organizations and agencies representing the United States, Canada, Mexico, and several Caribbean and Central and South American countries gathered together in the spirit of bird conservation. Talks and posters covered landbird, waterfowl, shorebird, and waterbird research as well as conservation efforts. At this meeting we were able to connect with people from other agencies and organizations doing similar work; not only did we meet new friends, we also made several contacts with people who we can potentially collaborate and partner with in future bird studies and conservation efforts both locally and nationally. The conference ended with a truly bonding experience: conservationists from Latin America teaching (or should I say, attempting to teach) the gringos how to dance the salsa.

In July of this year, we reconvened at the most recent California PIF (CalPIF) meeting at the Sagehen Field Station near Truckee. We heard reports from a few of the Working Group Committees, including the Communications Committee about ways in which Conservation Plans can be circulated more widely. Among the items of business with the Research and

Continued on page 3

Partners in Flight

Continued from page 2

Monitoring Committee was updating the research section of the CalPIF website. Again we connected with people from other organizations and agencies, forging friendships and partnerships, and fostering new ideas for research and conservation. The theme of the meeting was "A Coordinated Approach to the Conservation of Birds in Mountain Meadows of California." Not only did we learn lots about ecology and conservation of mountain meadow systems, we also had the opportunity to participate in early morning bird banding where we saw Lincoln's Sparrows, MacGillivray's Warblers, and Oregon Juncos.

For those of you interested in learning more about California Partners In Flight, visit their web page at <http://www.prbo.org/calpif/index.html>. You can also learn more about the national PIF at <http://www.partnersinflight.org/>.

~Sherry Hudson
Director, Landbird Program

Needle in a Haystack

According to the Bird Banding Lab (BBL) at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, in Maryland, there are 57 million banded birds throughout the United States and Canada and a total of 3 million recaptures, resightings and recoveries. That is about a 5.3% chance of recovery overall. Most of the birds "recovered" are game birds-waterfowl shot by responsible hunters who then diligently turn in their information to the BBL. "Nongame" recoveries are much more rare: 689,019 birds were banded in 2001 and 8,057 total bands recovered

(1.2%) as compared to 359,693 game birds banded and 89,147 recovered (24.8%, <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/homepage/howmany.htm>).

But what are the odds that only the band will be found, still attached to the bone? The BBL does not give numbers for banded body part recoveries, but they have to

be low. However, in early June while doing tern surveys in the north Bay, we found a banded "leg" on an island in a salt pond. The heads of the tarsus held on both the USFWS metal band and a single

color band while the rest of the bird decomposed away. A banding report came back from BBL: this was once a Western Gull that had been banded as a juvenile on the Farallon Islands in 1989.

Bird banding is one of the most useful tools in the study of birds. Recoveries reported to the BBL provide

information on species distribution and movements, abundance, reproduction, and life span. So keep your eyes out for those bands- on live or dead birds they provide valuable information.

~Cheryl Strong
Director, Birds of
the Baylands Program



PHOTO BY CHERYL STRONG

Not much of this banded Western Gull remains except for a leg bone and a couple of bands. Even this recovery of a 'banded bird' can be informative.

SFBBO RECOVERIES OF BANDED BIRDS

These birds were previously banded at the place and on the date indicated below. Recoveries can be very valuable in telling us about the species.

A **Violet-green Swallow**, captured on September 7, 2002, was banded near Redwood City, CA as a hatching year (juvenile) bird too young to fly on June 19, 2002.

A **Cooper's Hawk**, captured on March 14, 2001, was banded near San Francisco, CA as a hatching year bird on September 22, 1998.

A **Swainson's Thrush**, captured on May 30, 1999, was banded near Klamath, Oregon as an after hatching year (adult) on June 1, 1998.

A **Fox Sparrow**, captured on November 14, 1998, was banded near Yakutat, Alaska as a hatching year bird on August 29, 1998.

A **Swainson's Thrush**, captured on June 4, 1998, was banded near Big Sur, CA as a hatching year bird only five days earlier on May 31, 1998.

How are birds adapted to flight?



PHOTO BY SCOTT J. NORTON WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

This Great Blue Heron prepares to take off from its perch. These birds, like most others are creatures that are exceptionally suited physiologically for their principal means of transportation: flight. Photo Courtesy of Scott J. Norton

In 1507 a group of Portuguese sailors led by Captain Mascaregnas was blown off course onto the island of Mauritius. Sailing the globe in the 1500s was a grueling experience and the birds they found on this island, whilst not particularly tasty, proved to be a literal life-saver. By the late 1600s the dodo was extinct because of over-hunting by humans and predation by introduced species. Had this odd-looking bird retained its ability to fly it would probably still be with us today. What features do we find in the dodo's surviving relatives, the other birds, which make them such excellent fliers?

Two major benefits of flight are the increased ability to find food and

increased predator avoidance. A day of bird watching in the San Francisco Bay can offer spectacular views of terns hovering and plunging to catch fish. To achieve this level of flying ability terns and other species have had to evolve many specialized features. The bird's eye is proportionally larger than in other animals and this allows them to resolve details at up to three times as far as humans in some birds. This is achieved by the bird's retina having 3 - 5 times the density of light sensitive cells as humans. The field of vision of most birds is very large, allowing them to scan their surroundings very efficiently. The resulting loss of binocular vision, essential for estimating distance, is compensated for by the bird shifting its head

from side to side and getting two different points of view of an object. Birds also have increased color perception with some species, including mallards and some hummingbirds, being able to detect ultraviolet light. The value of this ability is debated but it is certainly used in finding food and selecting mates.

The bird's body allows it to maneuver efficiently through the air, or in the case of some, the water - penguins effectively fly through the water. With feathers facing backward, the head held forward and feet tucked under, the average bird body is perfectly streamlined and balanced. To reduce weight birds have developed pneumatized bones - bones that are not solid but contain air sacs, some of which are connected to the respiratory system. These hollowed-out bones are in turn supported by strut-like structures and so they remain strong. In many aquatic birds this feature has been lost, as they need to dive underwater in search of food and the added buoyancy would be a disadvantage. Another weight and balance related adaptation is the centering of all the organs around the middle of the body. This improves the center of balance and means the bird can spend less energy on aligning its body and more on actual directional flight. Birds have even forfeited teeth in order to centralize their mass and increase their balance. In exchange they have evolved the gizzard, a fibrous muscular digestive organ that grinds down hard food. They have also reduced their excretory system, so saving on weight and reducing water loss and, similarly, they have reduced their reproductive systems. Females only have one ovary and this is greatly reduced in size. In the breeding season it swells considerably, in some species, so much so that the female has a reduced flying ability.

The most obvious feature of flight, the wing, is superbly adapted to its function.

Continued on page 5

SOUTH BAY CELEBRITIES



PHOTO BY SCOTT J. NORTON WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

If you visit the South Bay to see the birds, you may recognize these two celebrities. Two burrowing owls, part of a family of two adults and three juveniles, peer from their hole near the entrance to the Don Edwards SF Bay National Wildlife Refuge's Environmental Education Center in Alviso. Photo Courtesy of Scott J. Norton.

How are birds adapted to flight?

Continued from page 4

Apart from providing dynamic lift, the same lift we experience in an airplane, the wing also thrusts the bird forward and in the case of hummingbirds, backward.

Enlarged breast muscles allow a powerful downstroke. Dark colored muscle has a more comprehensive blood supply and so can offer sustained power whereas light colored muscle will provide short bursts of energy, as needed during an escape from a predator or a dash for prey. To conserve weight, the upstroke, which obviously takes less effort, is driven by a smaller set of muscles and is assisted by the furcula, or the wishbone as it is commonly called. The furcula absorbs energy in the downstroke and then springs back,

assisting in lifting the wing. The wing is also rotated on the upstroke allowing it to slice through the air and so cut down on resistance.

Birds have also adopted behaviors that make them more efficient fliers. The easily recognizable "V" flight formation reduces the energy a bird needs by up to 15% if a bird is behind one of its traveling companions and this 15% could be very important if there is a long migration underway. Birds of prey are also noted for riding thermals, soaring, in order to reduce energy loss. Often birds such as the commonly seen turkey vulture will wait until several hours after sunrise before lifting off and then be able to fly

for prolonged periods without a single wing flap.

If there had been a single predator on Mauritius to force the dodo to retain its flying ability, then it probably would have survived the onslaught of man and all his companions. As it was the 40-pound bird with reduced wings and a propensity for eating stones (possibly to aid in digestion) stood no chance. Today many of its cousins face a similar though less rapid decimation and it will take a concerted effort by all to conserve the environments that these creatures need to survive.

~Ian Walsh

Birds of the Baylands Intern

Glop, glop, glop. Augh! I'm stuck in the mud again! As I grip my rubber boot with both hands and yank as hard as I can, something catches my eye. Mixed among the Forster's tern colony that we have come to survey are two large pink birds. Pink? Flamingos! But what are they doing here? We are at Knight Island in the North Bay surveying terns, and I was definitely not expecting to see flamingos in the salty, tidal flats. The two flamingos have been living in this part of the bay for several years, and are apparently escapees from the nearby amusement and wild animal park. The bird that has been made famous for its striking appearance and roles in children stories like Alice in Wonderland has made itself a home in our own backyard.

There are five species of flamingos ranging from the smallest, Lesser Flamingos, to the largest, Greater Flamingos. In between are Chilean, Andean, James, and Caribbean Flamingos. They range from about 31.5 inches tall, 5.5 pounds to 51 inches tall, 7.7 pounds. Most flamingos are found in temperate South America, Africa, India, Caribbean and the Andes Mountains. However, they can survive in lagoons and lakes as long as there is a lot of mud and water. This habitat can include sandy islands and intertidal zones, large alkaline and saline lakes, swamps, and tidal flats-like the ones found at Knight Island.

Named after the Latin word for flame, the most noticeable feature of flamingos is their stunning color. The color can range from light pink to striking crimson in the Caribbean flamingos. The unique color comes from the birds diet. Flamingos are filter feeders and collect food particles by placing their beaks upside-down in the water and then moving it back and forth while pumping the water with their tongues past finger-like projections called lamellae located inside the beak. Caribbean Flamingos pump water 4-5 times a second through the lamellae, while Lesser Flamingos can pump water at up to 20 times a second! Their diet includes small

FLAMINGOS IN THE NORTH BAY



This Caspian tern seems to be saying, "there goes the neighborhood" in response to sharing its area of the Baylands with a couple strange occupants.

particles high in alpha and beta-carotene like diatoms, blue-green algae, small crustaceans, mollusks, insects and even fish. It is the alpha and beta carotenoid pigments found in these foods that give the flamingos their famous color.

A surprising feature of the two flamingos in the North Bay is that there are only two of them. As depicted by the many front lawns dominated by hoards of plastic pink birds, flamingos usually congregate in packs to breed, as well as stay in these colonies for the rest of the year. The appearance of only two in the bay suggests that they are indeed escapees from the local park. Although colonies can include thousands of individuals, not every breeding pair reproduces each year. Additionally, breeding doesn't correspond with a particular season. The breeding period usually depends on the amount and timing of rainfall in the habitat region, which can vary from year to year. Once the colony begins breeding, all pairs in the colony will begin in order to raise most of the young at the same time. This makes it easier to defend nests and protect and feed chicks. Full colonies can be seen doing courtship displays and breeding dances at the same time. Usually these displays include calling, preening and marching. Although there can be large variation in visual displays, they are all very vocal. Flamingos are known for their noisy grunting, growling and honking.

Once nesting begins, flamingos can take up to six weeks to build a nest out of mud, stones, and feathers. The volcano shaped structures can be almost a foot tall. Once the single large white egg has been laid, the parents will take turns incubating it for 26 to 31 days. Flamingo chicks are grey with swollen pink legs. Instead of being fed regurgitated food like most birds, chicks are fed "crop milk." This liquid is secreted from the digestive tract and is very high in both protein and fat. Both parents are able to provide their chick with this nutritious meal. Less than a week after hatching, chicks will leave the nest and join other chicks in a nursery, called a crèche, watched over by a few adults.

Parents find their chicks through vocalization and sight recognition.

Three years after hatching, the chicks will begin to turn from grey to pink, and after six years they are able to reproduce. The flamingo lifespan is about 20 years in the wild, and can be twice that in captivity.

Although flamingos are usually non-migratory, they have been known to do so and have even been recorded flying up to 373 miles a night. They can exceed 35 miles per hour in the air. None of the five species of flamingos is currently considered endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. The James Flamingo was thought to be extinct for more than thirty years before it was rediscovered in 1957 in the Andes. Since then, all flamingos are listed as near threatened, and are recognized under several international treaties and unions as being in need of protection. Like most other wildlife, however, these birds are under continuous threat from human encroachment. Large colonies can be easily broken up by pollution and other destruction of their fragile habitats.

The appearance of these remarkable birds in the North Bay left a lasting impression long after I was able to climb my way out of the mud. Though the pair is probably not nesting, the appearance of these two flamingoes in an area so far from typical nesting grounds shows how extraordinary these birds are.

~Ellie Loomis

Birds of the Baylands Intern

Our thanks to these supporters of the Observatory...

MEMBERSHIPS

Thank the following new and returning SFBBO Members, January through June 2003 at the following levels of Memberships:

CONTRIBUTOR

Barry and Virginia Langdon-Lassagne, Donald Lewis, Frederica Howell

SUPPORTER

Associated Students of Andrew Hill High School, Ron and Susan Briggs, Juliette Bryson, Ann Chiller, Charles and Joan Coston, William Danielson, Christine Doyle, Cliff Drowley, Four Wheel Campers Inc., Marilyn Gallaway, Richard and Terry Horrigan, Steve Huckabone, Peter and Sue LaTourrette, Julie and Robert MacLean, Eileen McLaughlin, Sandy and Stephen Moore, Clyde Morris, Jean Myers, Frances and Leroy Nelson, Scott Norton, Armin Ramel, Karl and Helen Tashjian, William Taylor, Bill Walker and Mary Wisnewski, Catherine Whiteside, Virginia and Riley Willcox, Associates and Families

BASIC

Sabine Axt, Robert Ball, Liz and Bob Bathgate, Bill and Rita Bevans, William Bilobran, Robert and Marion Blau, Diana Bonogofsky, William Bousman, Victor and Norma Bravo, Eleanor Briccetti, Sandra Brinks, Gail Brownell, Ruth Buneman, David Burnham, Patricia Busk, Norma Cabot, Eugenia and Peter Caldwell, Roy Cameron, Art Carey, Paul Carroll, Richard Casserley, Doug and Gail Cheeseman, Robert and Susan Christiansen, Irene Contreras, Kathleen and Derek Currall, Jay Davis, Carol Dienger, Alan Eisner, Don and Margaret Emery, Mike Feighner, Arthur Feinstein and Ruth Vose, Don Ganton, Ira Greenberg, Theresa Grieve, Arnel Guanlao, Joan and David Hadden, John Harris, Hugh and Rosita Harvey, Grace Hattori, Winchell Hayward, Howard Higley, Jan Hintermeister, Bridget Hoffman and Marciano Pitargue, Wen Hsu, Lee Hung and Mike Danzenbaker, Carole Hutchinson, Amy Hutzler, June Hymas, Chris and Cyndie Illes, Dorothy Johnson, David Johnston, Eileen Kay, Mary Keitelman, Mary Kelly, Milt Klassen, Julie

Klingmann, John and Renata Kroeger, Edwin Laak, Joseph and Janice Lapointe, David Lewis, Bob and Sharon Lutman, Karen Lynch, Dean Manley, Lori Mann, Lester and Mary Manson, Beverly May, Kevin McKereghan, Sylvia McLaughlin, Kate Merriman, Mark Miller, Christian Molick, Dolores Morrison, Dena Mossar, Thomas Moutoux, Mary Murphy, Bess Nericcio, Donna Olsen, Kristen Olson, Philip Pendleton, Edy and Bill Pounders, Charles and Barbara Preuss, Peter Radcliff, Mary Lou Ramsey, Jean Richmond, Robert Roadcap, Cindy Roessler, Milly Rose, Annemarie Rosengreen, John Rothermel, Steve Rutledge and Julie Beer, Susan Sandstrom, Doni Saunders, Marilyn and Phil Scowcroft, Debi Shearwater, Helga Small, Kendric and Marion Smith, Robin Smith, Larry Spivak, Debbie Stephenson, Madeleine Stovel, Emilie Strauss, Beverley Strong, Karl and Helen Tashjian, Nola Theobald, Bracey and Richard Tiede, Sok King Tng and Murali Annavaram, Francis Toldi, Marilyn and George Trabert, Ruth and Gene Troetschler, Erin Ulrich, Dawn Vogelsong, Judith Wagner, Alan and Sandra Walther, Nancy Warner, Grant and Kathleen Webb, Allan and Julia Wofchuck, Claire Wolfe

CONTRIBUTIONS

We thank the following for their special gifts to SFBBO, January through June 2003:

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTORS

S.B. Meyer and Dan Pappone, April and Mark Sapsford, Jessie Schilling, Adam Winer, Kendra Armer, Paul and Joan Armer, Sharry Baker and David Merker, Virginia Becchine, Daniel Becker and Johanna van de Woestijne, Francesca Berger, Bob and Barbara Brandriff, Norma Cabot, Roy Cameron, Dudley Carlson, Richard and Pat Carlson, Sandy Cortright, Gerry Ellis, David Elwonger, Don and Margaret Emery, Eddie Gilmartin, Helen Green, Marsha and Ralph Guggenheim, Jan Hintermeister, Angus Hull, Lee Hung and Mike Danzenbaker, Susan Hunt, Martha Hunton, David Johnston, Milt Klassen, Robin Leong, William Lundgren, Marian Mankos, Maria McDonald, Phil and Vi Nisonger, Donna

Olsen, Margaret and C.J. Panton, Joseph Podolsky, Patricia Polentz, Armin Ramel, Michael and Alma Rogers, Jennifer Rycenga and Peggy Macres, James and Andrea Sandstrom, Louisa Squires, Lowell Saumweber, Ruth Scarborough, Maggie and Contee Seely, Vicki Silvas-Young, Robin Smith, Linda Sullivan, Zona Walcott and Ron Goldthwaite, Daniel Watson

FOUNDATIONS

Bay Trail/ Coastal Conservancy, California Wildlife Foundation, City of San Jose Watershed Grants Program, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, San Francisco Bay Estuary Project, San Francisco Foundation, United Way Silicon Valley

WISH LIST

Architectural drawing services

Digital camera for

Coyote Creek Field Station rarities

Ergonomic chairs

Computer desks

Outdoor furniture

25HP outboard motor

Someone willing to provide intern housing through lease or donation

SPECIAL WISH FOR CCFS

We'd love help in locating a copy of the apparently out-of-print book: "Moult and ageing of European passerines", by L. Jenni and R. Winkler. Academic Press, London, 1994

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jan Hintermeister, PRESIDENT
Santa Clara

Lou Young, Vice-PRESIDENT
San Jose

Vicki Silvas-Young, SECRETARY
San Jose

Richard Carlson, TREASURER
Palo Alto

Gerry Ellis Sandy Spakoff
San Jose Palo Alto

Chris Gill Scott Terrill, Ph.D.
San Jose Los Gatos

STAFF

Janet Tashjian Hanson
Executive Director

Bryan Dias
Director of Outreach & Education

Sharon Miyako
Outreach & Education Intern

LANDBIRD PROGRAM

Sherry Hudson Alvaro Jaramillo
Program Director Biologist

Gina Barton
Biologist

BIRDS OF THE BAYLANDS PROGRAM

Cheryl Strong Sue Macias
Program Director Biologist

Robin Dakin
Associate Biologist

From the Executive Director

If you wish to discuss any aspect of the Observatory's work, please write to me at jthanson@sfbbo.org or at P.O. Box 247, Alviso CA 95002, or call me at 408-946-6548. I am always pleased to talk with any of our wonderful supporters.

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

SFBBO

Telephone: 408/946-6548

Fax: 408/946-9279

Email: sfbbo@sfbbo.org

Web site www.sfbbo.org

The Stilt is a quarterly publication of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory. Graphic design by Proteus Graphics, Palo Alto. Printed on recycled paper by The Robots Printing Company, Mountain View. For permission to reprint any portion of it, call the Observatory at 408/946-6548.

Copyright, 2003 San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory.

The Bird Observatory is located at 1290 Hope Street in Alviso, behind the historic Bayside Canning Co. building. If you would like to visit the office or our Coyote Creek Field Station, please call in advance.

Board meetings are held monthly and are open to the Membership. Call the Observatory for dates and times.

THE TERN OF EVENTS

As we discussed in this column a couple issues back, birds can tell us a lot about the environment that surrounds us. It's very important for SFBBO to communicate the story that birds can tell to the wide audience that needs this information, not just scientists, but land managers, policymakers, and the general public. Perhaps the best and most-enduring method for accomplishing this is through education. SFBBO has a unique opportunity to bring people up-close to the hands-on conservation science and population biology work we do.

One of our main goals in education at SFBBO is to inform people about the "bigger picture." That is, how the work we do is relevant to the local ecosystem on a whole, such as to water and habitat quality, and how this then relates to the human condition in our area. In various and profound ways, we are able to show people the interconnectivity of life and our environment ranging from the local scale, such as by showing visitors to the Coyote Creek Field Station the garbage that has washed down the creek's watershed, to a much larger scale, by illustrating for example, how the SF Bay Area is a major stopover point on the Pacific Flyway.

We feel it is important for folks to develop an understanding and appreciation – a sense of stewardship – towards our sensitive environment. With hot front burner issues like salt pond restoration and habitat destruction looming large in our area's "eco-news," creating this sense of stewardship in local residents is more critical than ever. The root of what we do – the science – provides excellent raw material or content for effective education. Bringing folks to the field station to witness bird banding or taking them on a guided walk discussing "birds and salt ponds" can create a tangible educational experience that can resonate with people for the rest of their lives. It is through this "resonance" that we can best inspire effective stewards.

Thanks in large part to a grant from the Santa Clara Valley Water District, we have been fortunate enough to bring a highly qualified environmental education intern, **Sharon Miyako**, on-board to help us more fully realize the potential for environmental education we

have here at SFBBO. We are very excited about our growing education program and hope to have the opportunity (read: "funding") to continue. Keep on the lookout on our website, in our e-newsletter, and here in *The Stilt* for upcoming educational programs and activities.

Here are some things to watch for from SFBBO:

- We are very pleased to announce that **Bird Banding Demonstrations and visits to the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) are once again starting up!** Thanks to our second-year "Watershed Stewardship" grant from the Santa Clara Valley Water District, we will be offering trips to CCFS free of charge on the first and third Saturdays of every month (with a couple holiday and event exceptions.) Reservations are required and the maximum group size is 15 persons. If you are interested in attending a station visit, please email us at outreach@sfbbo.org or call (408) 946-6548 to RSVP. If you would like more information on CCFS, bird banding, or visits, please visit our website at www.sfbbo.org.
- **2003 California Fall Challenge results will be published in the next edition of *The Stilt*.** Thanks to everyone who participated – especially the fundraisers! We are already planning the 2004 version to be bigger, better, and more fun than ever!
- **The SFBBO Expert Guided Walk Series continues** – every third weekend of the month watch for our guided interpretive walks in some of the best spots for birds and habitat and lead by the best guides in the Bay Area. Various locations and themes or topics are presented each time allowing for a different, unique, and highly informative experience. These walks are free to members and a donation of \$10 is requested from all non-members. Check our website for the next date and location at www.sfbbo.org.
- **Are you an SFBBO volunteer?** If so, we'd like to show our appreciation for you and the critical work you do for the Observatory with a Volunteer Appreciation Dinner scheduled for Thursday, February 19th – more details coming soon!

~Bryan Dias
Outreach Coordinator



San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory
P.O. Box 247 1290 Hope Street Alviso, CA 95002
phone 408 946-6548 fax 408 946-9279 admin@sfbbo.com

Non Profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
ALVISO, CA
PERMIT #9