

The Stilt

Spring 2003

SAN FRANCISCO BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY NEWSLETTER

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

TWENTY YEARS OF SALT PONDS AND SFBBO

SFBBO was hatched on the salt ponds of South San Francisco Bay. Our first major contribution cataloged the nesting birds found using salt pond islands and levees in 1981. Founders Mike and Theresa Rigney documented 30 California Gull nests on salt pond A6, the first such nesting found near the coast and the first colonization of a new site by gulls probably originally from Mono Lake.

The idea had been incubating since the early 70's. SFBBO's founders like the Rigney's and Dick Mewaldt had organized under SFBBO's original moniker, South Bay Institute for Avian Studies. Dues were \$1.00 per year and a statement at the bottom of the stationary read "Dedicated to the study, preservation and enjoyment of our native avifauna." The name was changed shortly after the incorporation in 1981, but the strong purpose for such a group remained the same: that biologists could leverage volunteers to do good science, and to help the birds of the South Bay Area.

SFBBO has now been working steadily on the salt ponds for 22 years, primarily gathering data on our nesting waterbirds and migratory shorebirds. Every year we have trained new volunteers and welcomed back veterans to the complex world of the South Bay and the huge populations of birds it supports in different ways. We have combated a lot of myths along the way:

MYTH 1 *Salt ponds are devoid of life.* On the contrary, many of the low and medium salinity ponds support rich collections of invertebrates and fish, which in turn support the millions of birds that use the ponds during different seasons and stages in their own life cycles. Most of the south bay's marsh was lost to salt pond creation during the last 150 years and marsh inhabitants, like the Clapper Rail, have suffered devastating population declines. However, during that time, many species of waterbirds have adapted to the ponds and become dependent upon their resources.

bottom topography, usual salinity, etc. For example, SFBBO's years of pond-specific information show that some provide excellent winter roost for grebes and waterfowl; others are predictably used by thousands of migrating sandpipers in late April, for forage and high tide roost.

Continued on page 2



Aerial photograph of the South Bay's Salt Ponds. SFBBO's considerable experience on the ponds will be integral in the restoration process over the coming years. Photo courtesy of the US Geological Survey.

PHOTO BY: USGS



VICKI JENNINGS

In this issue:

- 1 *Twenty Years of Salt Ponds and SFBBO*
Director's Corner
- 3 *CCFS Update*
Streamside Songbirds in the South Bay
- 4 *Western Snowy Plover*
- 5 *Rookeries Around the Bay: Herons and Egrets*
- 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.



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

MYTH 2 *A salt pond is a salt pond is a salt pond.* Each salt pond is entirely unique in size, location, drainage,

TWENTY YEARS OF SALT PONDS AND SFBBO

Continued from page 1

MYTH 3 *All the salt ponds have been acquired.* 16,000 acres of ponds were sold to the Refuge (USFWS) and to the California Department of Fish and Game. Cargill Salt will continue to make salt on 11,000 acres of salt ponds located in the southeast portion of the bay, between the northern border of the Alameda Flood Control Channel and Coyote Creek on the south. About two-thirds of the remaining acres in salt production are actually owned by the Refuge and have public trails.

MYTH 4 *There is no public access to salt ponds.* Several wonderful loop trails exist around the ponds as part of the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. SFBBO is proud to be a partner of our Refuge, and to promote their Centennial Celebration events. We encourage everyone to visit, support and enjoy the unique experiences the Refuge provides.

MYTH 5 *The hard part is done.* The USFWS, CDFG and Cargill Salt are to be congratulated on completing the acquisition agreement. Now the new "hard part" begins: the Coastal Conservancy is the lead agency on planning the eventual restoration of south bay habitats. SFBBO was part of the Habitat Goals process that recommends creating a mosaic of south bay habitats to provide continued support for the greatest number of species. SFBBO biologists are already engaged in the process of actual restoration planning. Our expertise includes:

- Nesting waterbirds. SFBBO's 22 years of tracking waterbird colonies provides important information on species locations, sizes of colonies, how they changes and moved over the years, and some productivity estimates.
- Avian botulism, prevalent throughout the south bay and possibly exacerbated by increasing acreage of shallow brackish lagoon.
- Contaminants in fish-eating birds. Our preliminary results show high mercury loads in our nesting tern colonies. Changing tidal flows can re-suspend contaminants in the water column for uptake into the food chain.
- An on-the-ground understanding of the opportunities and challenges the south bay presents. Did you know that there are still five operating landfills in the south bay? Did you know that 15% of the entire threatened Western Snowy Plover population breeds in particular spots of the salt pond system? The synthesis of this type of data and hundreds of other questions relating to hydrology are the challenging elements of the restoration planning process.

As the rains subside this spring, SFBBO biologists are already conducting workshops for new and returning volunteers. We will again head out to the ponds, just as we have for 22 years, to find plover nests, to mark the arrival of terns on their traditional nesting islands, and to continue to witness the ongoing spectacle of the

south bay's birds. We will continue to freely share our findings and to advise those managing these important habitats for the benefit of the wildlife using them.

~ Janet Hanson
Executive Director, SFBBO

SELECTED SFBBO SALT POND CONTRIBUTIONS

1981. Rigney, M. and T. Rigney. A breeding bird survey of the south San Francisco Bay salt pond levee system, 1981. Unpubl. report, South Bay Institute for Avian Studies. Prepared for USFWS. 130 pp.

1996. Layne, V. L., R. J. Richmond and P. J. Metropulos. First nesting of Black Skimmers on San Francisco Bay. *Western Birds* 27:159-162.

1998. Ryan, T. P. and J. L. Parkin. The Western Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) in southern San Francisco Bay: summary of detections made during Colonial Waterbird Monitoring Surveys from 1981 to 1997. Prepared for the Santa Clara Valley Water District.

2000. Ryan, T. P. Species account: Caspian Tern. In: San Francisco Estuary Baylands Ecosystem Goals. San Francisco Bay Area Wetlands Ecosystem Goals Project, San Francisco Estuary Project, Oakland, CA.

2000. Shuford, D. and T. P. Ryan. Nesting populations of California and Ring-billed Gulls in California: recent surveys and historical status. *Western Birds*: 31: 133-164.

2002 Warnock, N., G. Page, T. Ruhlen, N. Nur, J. Takekawa and J. Hanson. Management and Conservation of San Francisco Bay Salt Ponds: Effects of Pond Salinity, Area, Tide, and Season on Pacific Flyway Waterbirds. *Waterbirds* 25(Special Publication 2): 79-92, 2002.

Over the years, SFBBO has been proud to partner with the following organizations in our salt pond work:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Don Edwards
San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Contaminants
Division
San Francisco Foundation
California Department of Fish and Game
California Coastal Conservancy

PRBO Conservation Science
Cities of Sunnyvale, San Jose and
Mountain View
Santa Clara Valley Water District
Wildlife Rescue, Palo Alto
Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley
Selected SFBBO salt pond contributions

CCFS Update

The breeding season at the Coyote Creek Field Station started with a bang. Common Yellowthroats and Song Sparrows are busily singing their hearts out, and Song Sparrows have already been captured with developed brood patches. We've seen a pair of White-tailed Kites copulating and exhibiting other breeding behavior. One has been repeatedly seen offering food to the other by circling over it with a juicy morsel in its talons.

Brown-headed Cowbirds have returned for the breeding season

and Bullock's Orioles should be flying in from Mexico very soon. Typically, older male Bullock's Orioles arrive

before younger males, giving them an advantage in establishing territories and finding mates. The older females also arrive earlier than younger males, again putting the younger males at a reproductive and territorial disadvantage. Poor guys! They are a generally monogamous species and females will usually pair with a male on the morning they arrive. Talk about not wasting any time!

In March with the help of our new intern Amy Scarpignato, we began surveying CCFS and another area on Coyote Creek for breeding birds by mapping all breeding territories of our resident birds. We will be looking for nests to track their success. Stay tuned for our results.

Very soon we will be saying goodbye to our many winterers: Golden-crowned Sparrows, White-crowned Sparrows, Hermit Thrushes, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Fox Sparrows, Lincoln's Sparrows and Northern Flickers.

In preparation for their breeding season elsewhere, our wintering Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Yellow-rumped Warblers began to sing the week of March 3rd and 10th, respectively.

Also, spring migration will be gearing up soon so we will be keeping a look out for our favorites: Western Flycatchers, Wilson's Warblers, Yellow Warblers, Warbling Vireos, and Swainson's Thrushes. Swainson's Thrushes are passing through from Mexico and northern South America on their way to breeding grounds. Since Swainson's have the Hermit Thrushes beat on the distance they

migrate, their wings average longer to allow for a more powerful flight.

We had two exciting mist net captures in March: a Northern Saw-whet Owl and a Sharp-shinned

Hawk both banded on the 5th. This was a late capture date for a Northern Saw-whet Owl, since historically the concentration has been between November and January. Approximately 70% of our netted Sharp-shinned hawks are young birds (Hatching and Second Year birds), and approximately 90% are males. Males average 57% of the body mass of females, making them the most sexually dimorphic raptor of North America.

Currently we are preparing for our annual vegetation surveys starting in May. If anyone is interested in volunteering, email or call Gina Barton here at SFBBO (408-946-6548 or gbarton@sfbbo.org). If not, then we hope you will take advantage of the spring weather and take a birding trip to CCFS. See you there!

~ Gina Barton
Landbird Biologist

Some of the information was taken from The Birds of North America Species Account



PHOTOS BY GINA BARTON

A Northern Saw-whet Owl banded in March at CCFS. This was a late capture date for this beautiful nocturnal species that appears larger in flight due to its broad wingspan ranging up to 60 cm.

Streamside Songbirds in the South Bay

Many of you have visited SFBBO's Coyote Creek Field Station, to do some weekend birding, for a banding demonstration, or maybe even to volunteer with the land-bird program. In our preliminary results from the CCFS ten-year period of 1987 - 1996 we discovered that many bird species there are doing very well. For example, results from two different survey methods, point counts and mist net surveys, showed that seven species* increased in number significantly over the ten-year period. During the same time period the native riparian (streamside) vegetation planted at CCFS by the Santa Clara Valley Water District in 1987 and 1993 was growing and maturing, creating more and presumably better habitat for the birds.

The news from our long-term banding station is encouraging, but we wondered if this was a unique occurrence, or if other streamside habitat in the South Bay also provided suitable habitat for birds. In 2001 SFBBO began a year-long study of birds and vegetation at five additional sites in the South Bay, funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. These sites were located along Coyote Creek and Guadalupe River and all were similar in habitat to CCFS: areas with forested streamside habitat with an adjacent, non-forested, overflow channel - where floodwaters from the creeks are captured so that our urban areas aren't inundated during exceptionally rainy winters.

My colleague, Gina Barton, and I got to know these areas very well throughout the year, and we even got flooded out several times during the winter! We experienced the movement of migrants through the area during spring and fall, and we saw winter resident species (mostly sparrows) leave in the spring and return in the late fall. At the beginning of 2002 we returned to SFBBO office life, to enter and analyze the data.

Continued on page 6

The Western Snowy Plover Recovery Unit

SFBBO is leading helping to lead the recovery of the Western Snowy Plover, a federally threatened species, around the SF Bay. As part of this effort, SFBBO is embarking on a full-scale breeding plover survey for the 2003 nesting season. In partnership with the Refuge, California Dept. of Fish and Game, East Bay Regional Parks District, and Hayward Area Recreation and Park District, volunteers and staff from SFBBO will survey salt ponds to locate plover nesting sites, record predator sightings, and chronicle water levels at adjacent ponds.

Western Snowy Plovers are small shorebirds that occur primarily on sandy beaches and intertidal areas of marine and estuarine habitats, but also occur in some inland areas such as salt evaporator ponds, riverbeds, lakes, and ponds. Along the Pacific Coast, Snowy Plovers are distributed on the mainland and offshore islands from southern Washington to Baja California Sur, Mexico.

During the breeding season, Snowy Plovers typically establish nest sites in unvegetated areas of open sandy beaches and estuaries. In the south bay they nest on levees, dredge spoil islands, and in dry salt pond beds from April through August. Snowy plovers may remain at the breeding location during the non-breeding period, or migrate to other areas. They feed on an assortment of terrestrial invertebrates, including brine flies, and are often seen foraging with a variety of other shorebirds, particularly during low tide cycles.

In fall and winter, plovers are common on sandy marine and estuarine shores, uncommon at salt ponds. Snowy Plovers move away from breeding areas in the fall, dispersing along the southern California coast. Within California the largest winter concentrations occur in Orange County.

We do not know if Snowy Plovers bred in San Francisco Bay prior to the construc-

tion of evaporator ponds. These ponds were constructed beginning in 1860; by 1930 63% of historic tidal marsh had been converted to salt evaporator ponds. Snowy Plovers were noted to be fairly common breeder in this area by 1918. Gill (Western Birds, 1977) provides an estimate of 150 breeding pairs in southern San Francisco Bay in 1971.

Nesting density and territorial defense appear to depend on predators. Their clutch size ranges from 2-6 eggs, with an average of 3 eggs. Incubation is mostly



PHOTO BY: DAVID CARDINAL

SFBBO is embarking on a full-scale survey for breeding Western Snowy Plovers in 2003. This survey will assist in management decisions and a recovery plan focused on the Western Snowy Plover, listed as a federally threatened species.

Photo courtesy of Cardinal Photography – www.cardinalphoto.com.

done by the male, and lasts approximately 24 days. Snowy plover young are precocial, following the adults to feeding areas within 1 day. The young are agile and often able to avoid predators within 2 days after hatching. Fledging age is reported as 29-47 days. Gulls, ravens, red fox, coyotes, and skunks are important predators of adults, eggs, and young.

Their habit of nesting on sandy marine beaches has brought them into constant contact with humans using these areas for recreation. The increase in nesting populations at salt ponds and other inland areas is likely opportunistic and may compensate somewhat for increased human disturbance at the coastal nesting sites.

The Western Snowy Plover is a federally threatened species. Widespread loss of nesting habitat has resulted in significant declines of this species. These declines are attributed to a variety of disturbances including development in coastal areas, off-road vehicles, feral and uncontrolled domestic animals and predation from avian and mammalian predators.

SFBBO staff and volunteers counted plovers opportunistically during colonial waterbird surveys between 1982 and 1997. We counted a high of 104 individuals in

1994; however since then there has been a dramatic decline in birds counted during the breeding season. However, we have no data to report concerning nesting substrates, reproductive performance or foraging habits and not all areas were covered by our opportunistic surveys.

During January 2002, SFBBO volunteers embarked on the first comprehensive winter window survey in many years. Through the dedicated efforts of many of you, we were able to locate nearly 300 wintering plovers, mostly in an area where plovers were not previously known to winter: 264 plovers were located at the

salt ponds on the west end of the Dumbarton Bridge.

With the purchase of 16,000 acres of salt ponds, the road ahead is clear for state and federal management strategies to be developed that focus on the habitat requirements of the Western Snowy Plover, including managing water levels for brine fly production (a major prey item for the plover) and maintaining dry salt ponds and islands for nesting habitat away from human disturbance and mammalian predation. However, land managers cannot implement management activities that benefit the species until primary plover sites are located, and recovery objectives of increasing the numbers

Continued on page 6

Rookeries Around the Bay: Herons and Egrets

As anyone who has been near a rookery can attest, some of our earliest breeders are off to a great start for the 2003 nesting season. Herons and egrets are the "Valentine's birds" around the Bay, typically nesting by mid-February. Since 1982, SFBBO volunteers have been assessing populations of herons and egrets breeding in the South Bay region. In 2002, 20 colonies were tracked, with numbers of adults, nests, and chicks monitored over the breeding season.

Snowy Egrets appear to be the most abundant species nesting in the area, followed by Black-crowned Night Herons while Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets nested in smaller numbers.

Snowy Egrets are also the only species that appear to have increased in the southern Bay. Numbers of Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets have remained largely unchanged. Black-crowned Night Herons have decreased dramatically (Figure 1). All of these species have historically nested in the south bay (i.e. prior to the 1940's).

Green Herons and American Bittern likely nest in the south bay, but due to difficulties in assessing numbers of these secretive birds, SFBBO does not have breeding numbers for this species. Little Blue Herons and Cattle Egrets are relatively recent additions to the breeding avifauna of the south bay. Little Blue Herons, to our knowledge, have not bred in the area since 1997. Cattle Egrets also appear to



Snowy Egret (top) and Great Blue Heron (bottom). For over 20 years, SFBBO volunteers have been monitoring populations of these majestic birds in the South Bay. Photos courtesy of Scott J. Norton.

PHOTOS BY: SCOTT J. NORTON

have almost disappeared; a single nest was reported in the 2002 season.

Herons and egrets in southern San Francisco Bay face a multitude of hazards including human encroachment, habitat degradation, contaminants, changes in water levels, and changes in climatic conditions. Large historical colonies such as the ones at Bair Island and Mallard Slough no longer exist in the South Bay. We do not know if this is due to declines in the regional population, or shifts to new, unidentified areas. For example, Redwood Shores and Hayward Shoreline colonies were established shortly after the Bair Island colony disappeared. Double-crested Cormorant populations have expanded in the South Bay, taking over potential heron nesting spots. Cormorants can displace Great Blue Herons from their nests,

as has happened at Redwood Shores over the past few years. Mammalian predators, including the non-native red fox and feral cat, may also be attributing to the decline of these colonial birds.

Salt ponds still comprise the majority of available wildlife habitat in the south bay. The long-term restoration plan underway to restore some of the newly acquired Cargill ponds to tidal marsh may benefit some of our heron and egret species by increasing the amount of tidal areas for foraging and nesting.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT WILDLIFE USE OF SALT POND AND MARSH ECOSYSTEMS

(As part of a high school advanced placement biology project, Haley Revak investigated the importance of salt ponds and marsh ecosystems to birds.)

Are salt ponds as important an ecosystem as marshes in terms of their contribution to the maintenance of diverse and abundant wildlife in the San Francisco Bay Area?

To find an answer to this question, I performed two bird observations of a salt pond and a marshland of comparable sizes. I observed each habitat twice at high tide, counting and recording the species and numbers of birds.

I discovered that both the salt pond and the wetland ecosystem supported a wide variety of wildlife, each containing a few species that were not present in the other. However, the marsh habitat contained a greater number of species, and far more individuals in total. The salt pond contained a substantial number of birds, some of which may likely only be found in this specific ecosystem.

In total, the salt pond ecosystem supported 11 species and 660 individuals. The marshland ecosystem supported 18 species and 961 individuals. Birds were either roosting or foraging in both sites. Three species (Western Grebe, American White Pelican, and Semi-palmated Plover) were found exclusively in the salt pond area. Six species (Canada Goose, Northern Shoveler, American Coot, Black Phoebe, Red-Winged Blackbird, and Great Egret) were found exclusively in the marsh area.

My conclusions are that the salt ponds, while they do not support the greatest number of wildlife individuals or variety of species, do provide habitat for some species that might not otherwise be found in this area. In other words, the two habitats may be complementary: more species and individuals are supported overall when both habitats are present in the landscape. Wildlife diversity and abundance could decline due to the elimination of salt ponds in the San Francisco Bay Area.

~Haley Revak
Mountain View High School Student
and SFBBO Volunteer

Continued on page 6

STREAMSIDE SONGBIRDS IN THE SOUTH BAY

Continued from page 3

What did we find out? Since we surveyed the area for only one year, we weren't able to say whether the species that increased at CCFS had populations that were also increasing in the other areas. But we did find the same bird species occurring in roughly the same numbers at the five additional sites compared to CCFS. Our most common species at all sites were Song Sparrow, Bushtit, Chestnut-backed Chickadee and House Finch year round; and Lincoln's Sparrow and Hermit Thrush in the winter months. During the spring and summer months, we captured 23 species among the six study sites that were in breeding condition. Of these, we confirmed four species of birds that were breeding at all six study sites: Song Sparrow, House Finch, California Towhee, and Northern Mockingbird.

What were some of the differences we saw among the study sites? Bird diversity (a measurement that combines both number of birds and number of species) was significantly higher at CCFS than at the other Coyote Creek sites. Also, in the forested riparian habitat, more bird species were present at CCFS than at any other site. But, at our Coyote Creek site located just south of highway 237 we discovered more species and more individual birds in the overflow channel than in the overflow channel at any of the other sites. At CCFS we also detected the most species in breeding condition.

One species of particular interest is the Common Yellowthroat. Common Yellowthroats occurred in forested streamside vegetation at CCFS much more than the other sites. However, in the overflow channel Yellowthroats were most abundant at CCFS and at the sites along Guadalupe River, and non-existent at two of the additional Coyote Creek sites.

So what does all this mean? The main conclusion is that the number and type of birds we see at CCFS seem to be indicative of other, similar, streamside habitat in the South Bay. This is important for us to know because we make habitat restora-

tion recommendations to land managers based on what we find at CCFS. We have also discovered that overflow channels seem to provide important habitat for many riparian-associated birds.

As often happens, the results of this study caused us to ask more questions than we could answer. For example, why are there so many Common Yellowthroats at some sites and not at others? Why are there more species in forested riparian habitat at CCFS than at any other site? How does width of forested riparian vegetation and overflow channels affect bird numbers and productivity? And how does the surrounding landscape affect how birds use an area? These are all important questions that we strive to answer as we continue our studies here at SFBBO. As we continue our long-term survey of birds at CCFS, we also continuously look for new sources of funding to help us design future studies to answer our burning questions. As a starting point to answer some of these questions, our intern, Amy Scarpignato, is finding and following the fate of nests at CCFS this year. She will help us determine nesting success of birds (How many eggs hatch? How many nestlings fledge? Are Brown-headed Cowbirds affecting certain species?), and how this success is influenced by specific vegetation.

We hope that this and future SFBBO studies along creeks in the area will not only help to answer our many burning questions, but will also allow us to recommend restoration projects around the state and nation that will benefit birds during all seasons. So next time you are birding out at CCFS or any forested riparian area along creeks, think about what birds are using the area and how the vegetation affects them . . . and let us know if you come up with any more questions for us to try and answer!

~Sherry Hudson
Head Landbird Biologist

**Northern oriole, Bushtit, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Common Yellowthroat, Downy Woodpecker, Fox Sparrow, and Western Flycatcher*

Rookeries Around the Bay

Continued from page 5

SFBBO is currently working with Audubon Canyon Ranch on an historical atlas of herons and egrets on a bay-wide scale. We hope to gain more insight into the heron and egret populations within the region by looking at their movements and changes throughout the landscape over the past twenty years.

We at SFBBO would like to thank all of our dedicated volunteers without whom this project would not be possible.

~Cheryl Strong,
Head Birds of
the Baylands Biologist

Western Snowy Plover

Continued from page 4

and productivity of plovers cannot be realized without first establishing their current numbers in the Bay area.

Once primary plover sites are identified, management decisions focused on the Western Snowy Plover recovery plan can then be implemented, including managing water levels for brine fly production and reducing the risk of mammalian predation on nest. We can then produce a map of plover nesting sites for use in water level management and restoration decisions. This effort will be the first phase of a longer commitment by SFBBO to work with Fish and Wildlife Service and California Dept. of Fish and Game personnel to provide data for better management and to improve the productivity of the Western Snowy Plover in our area.

We would like to thank the many dedicated SFBBO volunteers who participated on these surveys, and Cargill Salt Division, the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, California Dept. of Fish and Game, and East Bay Regional Parks District for allowing us access to their properties.

~Cheryl Strong
Head Birds of
the Baylands Biologist
~Tom Ryan
Research Associate

Our thanks to these supporters of the Observatory...

MEMBERSHIPS

We thank the following for their membership support, November through December 2002:

Gary Anwyl, Sabine Axt, Ronald Barklow and Viola Saima-Barklow, Lorraine Bazan, Bonnie Bedford-White, George Bing, Juliette Bryson, John and Agnes Caulfield, Paul and Marijane Chestnut, Robert G. Clement, Howard L. Cogswell PhD, Michael Coughlin, Cecilia Craig, Maryann Danielson, William Danielson, Gordon and Carolyn Davidson, Marianne Dieckmann, Theodore and Catherine Dolton, Cliff Drowley, Michelle Eaton, Steve and Marcia Ellis, Albert and Sheila Faris, Dave and Susie Formenti, Marni Gagne and Bruce Ames, Marilynn Gallaway, Dennis Geiler, Wally and Lois Goldfrank, Shirley Gordon, Helen Green, Nancy and Herbert

WISH LIST

Upright vacuum cleaner
Outboard
 an environmentally friendly 2200
Powerpoint projector
Kayaks
Spotting scopes and tripods
Digital camera for rareties at CCFS
Deck at CCFS

Greenfield, Ed Gustafson, Dolores Hansen, Jack and Lois Hanson, Nancy Hay, Martha and Robert Helseth, George and Beverly Hesse, Judith Hoff, James Jeffers and Terry Pfeiffer, Michael and Carolyn Kulakofsky, Steve and Lisa Kurasch, Robert E. Lange, Dr. J. M. Langham, Randy and Janet Little, John Luther, Chris MacIntosh, Elizabeth Massie, Hugh McDevitt, Keith and Luella McFarland, John Mewaldt, Bonnie Michalek, T. Charles and Meredith Moore, Joseph Morlan, Anne G. Moser, Nick Neely, Dorothy Normark, Jean Palmeter, Margaret and C.J. Panton, Mark Paxton, John Ranlett, Patricia and Steven Roth, Leonard Rush, Doni Saunders, Jessie Schilling, Robert Schultz, Robert and Renia Seibel, Jeff Shaeffer and Tamee Becker, Rodney B. Siegel and Lisa William, Elinor Spellman, Jean-Marie Spoelman, Linda Sullivan, Jerry B. and Jo Towner, Dawn Vogel song, Mark Weinberger, Susan Wicks, Shirley Wodtke, Nick and Kathleen Yatsko, Frank and Winona Young

CONTRIBUTIONS

We thank the following for their gifts to SFBBO, October through December 2002:

Ronald Barklow and Viola Saima-Barklow, George Bing, Robert and Marion Blau, Patricia Busk, Floyd Carley, Marianne

Dieckmann, Leslie Flint, Harriet Gerson, Dolores Hansen, Mary L. Kelly MD, Sandy and Steve Moore, T. Charles and Meredith Moore, John and Nena Padley, Vicki Silvas-Young, Cheryl Strong and David Thomson, John and April Winchester

A special thank you to Lee Hung and Mike Danzenbaker have earned a special place in the hearts of SFBBO Staff with their generous donation of a nearly new refrigerator. We smile every time we fetch our lunch – thanks Lee and Mike!fied.

In Memory of Hazel Tilden

Hazel and her late husband James were charter members of SFBBO. She had a wonderfully active curiosity about California's cultural and natural history, an ardent student of local history and archeology, as well as our native birds and plants. Fortunately, she was also a teacher, who brought her enthusiasms into her elementary school classroom. Hazel always had a good word for those around her and was always on the go, including an Arctic trip just a few years ago. Hazel was a "hero" to those who had the honor of knowing her personally and to the natural world she championed.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jan Hintermeister, PRESIDENT
 Santa Clara

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

Mary Kuchlenz Lou Young
 Foster City San Jose

Mary Ann Mancuso
 Napa

STAFF

Janet Tashjian Hanson
 Executive Director

Bryan Dias
 Outreach & Education Coordinator

LANDBIRD PROGRAM

Sherry Hudson
 Lead Biologist

Gina Barton
 Biologist

Alvaro Jaramillo
 Biologist

BIRDS OF THE BAYLANDS PROGRAM

Cheryl Strong
 Lead Biologist

Sue Macias
 Biologist

RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Janis Buchanan Tom Ryan
 Daniel Kluza Emilie Strauss
 Chris Otahal Peg Woodin

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. Thanks very much!

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

SFBBO is extremely pleased to introduce Bryan Dias, our Outreach Coordinator. Bryan brings great knowledge of technology, the media, public and international environmental policy, and Oakland A's box scores. If you haven't visited our web site, take a look at Bryan's good work there. And let us know if you would like to receive our monthly e-newsletter, The Wingbeat, another of Bryan's great products. Just drop a line to outreach@sfbbo.org. Enjoy Bryan's first column!

~ Janet Hanson, Executive Director

There's a lot going on with birds around the Bay. So, that means there's a lot going on at SFBBO. You probably also know that SFBBO carries out critical scientific work on avian conservation biology in the region - important work that tells us much about the ecosystem we all inhabit. Who needs this information? Well, certainly, a lot of the stuff we do involves the scientific community. We work with various government agencies, organizations, and private groups - often in concert with their staff biologists - to get that info out there.

But these aren't the only folks who need or should hear about this important work. This is where outreach and education come in at SFBBO. It's important for us to let everyone know about the critical work that we do because it affects everyone: birds are great indicators of our ecosystem and its health. We all live here together and our avian neighbors can go a long way to tell us how we are doing in keeping up the neighborhood, if we listen. Who is "everyone" then? Besides scientists, that means land managers and politicians. These are most often the people who make decisions based on recommendations from the scientific community (and sometimes don't!) It's also environmental groups that do policy research and advocacy. It's educators who can use this information to teach their students science by way of local example. Lastly, it's the "general public." That's true for two reasons: enthusiasts, birders and the like, want to know where to see the birds and, as we've already mentioned, everybody needs to know about the environment in which we live and play stewards to.

Outreach is very important, both to you and us. We want to get the word! Here are a few upcoming things to look for. Please visit our website at www.sfbbo.org for more details on all of the following:

SFBBO is hosting the opportunity for birding and wildlife enthusiasts to nominate a segment of the Bay Trail to become part of a "Bay Trail Bird Walk," a cooperative project between SFBBO and the San Francisco Bay Trail Project. We have been awarded a grant from the Association of Bay Area Governments in association with the Coastal Conservancy for this program. Our project takes advantage of the opportunities the Bay Trail provides for bird watching and letting trail users know not only about the ecological highlights but also about environmental stewardship through education and outreach. We need your help to let us know your favorite birding sites along the Bay Trail.

International Migratory Bird Day is coming up Friday May 9th and Saturday 10th. This is a great international event that grows year after year. Events are happening all over North America, to raise awareness on migratory birds and their habitats. The one to attend in your backyard is at the Environmental Education Center at the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge in Alviso. Friday evening's event will feature talks from our staff and interpretive walks. Saturday is great day to bring out the family, as there will be numerous activities for the kids, table set-ups from various groups, interpretive walks and more. SFBBO will be hosting banding demonstrations at the Coyote Creek Field Station and we'll have a table set-up as well. Stop by and see us!

SFBBO is pleased to announce a series of guided interpretive walks based on the theme of "Birds and Salt Pond Restoration." Join us for this monthly series of weekend walks where SFBBO experts will show you the intricacies of the restoration effort and the critical role bird science will play in the process. We will take you to various sites around the Bay that highlight the issues and bring you up-close to where all the action is! The field trips are free to SFBBO members and a \$10 donation is requested from non-members. Please visit our website for times, locations, and other details or give us a call at (408) 946-6548.

Environmental Education is ramping up at SFBBO. We have a lot of great things to tell and teach here at SFBBO - the Coyote Creek Field Station is an excellent opportunity for seeing conservation science in action! Additionally, all of work and experience on the Bay's salt ponds provides a great foundation for critical and timely environmental education. We are proud to work with a growing list of excellent partners in this effort: Santa Clara Valley Water District, San Francisco Estuary Project, San Francisco Bay Trail, Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, and many others. If you are interested in joining our environmental education team we are looking for experienced committee members and enthusiastic outreach and education volunteers. For more information please see our website or email Bryan Dias, Outreach Coordinator, at bdias@sfbbo.org or call (408) 946-6548.

~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