

# The Stilt

Winter 2004/2005

SAN FRANCISCO BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY NEWSLETTER

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

## NEW HABITAT, NEW HOME

The Bayside Canning Co. in Alviso has been the home of SFBBO since its beginning, in 1981. When the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge was created in 1972, the cannery was included in the acquisition, originally intended as a south bay education center. Refuge personnel later gave the fledgling SFBBO permission to set up shop on the ground floor of the cannery itself; that space was only relinquished to the flood waters of 1983, forcing Observatory volunteers and staff to move upstairs, into a room that formerly served as a dormitory for cannery workers. In 2000, the main, cavernous space of the cannery was condemned and once again, the refuge generously provided SFBBO with a home, allowing us to place an office trailer on the concrete pad behind the cannery itself.

The Refuge is seeking to acquire viable habitat in trade for the cannery property. We are very grateful for the years of cooperation with the Refuge that have provided a home for the Observatory. Now it's time to search in earnest for SFBBO's new home.

A new larger, more accessible space will allow SFBBO to fulfill far more of the original goals envisioned by our founding Board in 1981. Our new home will ideally be close to the south Bay shoreline, with access to birding trails, wetland habitat and restoration activities. Our extensive collection of journals and monographs will be properly shelved and available to our membership and students, in accordance with the wishes of the two primary contributors, Dr. Howard Cogswell and the late Dr. Mewaldt. Visitors will be welcomed in an interpretive area designed to introduce them to not only the world of south bay birds but also to the historic restoration underway on the south bay. The SFBBO Membership will have a place to meet, to record birding notes and pause to read the latest birding publications. A conference room will serve as a classroom for volunteer training and public information meetings. Staff workspaces will be spacious and technologically up-to-date. Interns, grad students and visiting researchers will have workspace, library and computer access to make meaningful contributions to the restoration.

Our need for a new home coincides exactly with another home renovation project, the South Bay Restoration Project. San Francisco Bay is about to undergo the largest wetlands restoration in the west, on a similar scale to the Everglades. More than 15,000 acres of salt ponds will eventually be restored to tidal marsh, or become managed for wildlife. As the restoration planning unfolds, the gaps in our knowledge and our ability to fund the answers are becoming apparent and the restoration outcomes not at all certain. In April of this year, the Project's National Science Panel stated that "few funds remain for actually conducting the studies and gathering essential information that provide critical scientific input

*A new larger, more accessible space will allow SFBBO to fulfill far more of the original goals envisioned by our founding Board in 1981.*



VICKI JENNINGS

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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  
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# What's new in the landbird program...

2004 has been an exciting year of beginnings for SFBBO's landbird program. We've begun two brand new projects, one relatively short term and the other extending into the next few years: 'Streamside Songbirds at Gilroy Hot Springs' and 'Birds and Power Lines'. We are collecting data for the Streamside Songbird project until next May and for the Birds and Power Lines for two more years.

For the Streamside Songbirds project, we are assessing the presence of bird species during breeding, migration, and winter seasons along Coyote Creek's riparian corridor on property owned by the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority (SCCOSA). We want to know what species are using the land, and for what purpose. For example, what species depend on this land to raise their families, or what species depend on the land as a winter home. The property is near Coyote Lake Reservoir and Henry W. Coe State Park, along Gilroy Hot Springs Road. We spend two mornings per month there conducting area search surveys on our nine plots, looking for birds in a defined area, usually around 7 acres in size, for a fixed amount of time (twenty minutes for this project). After our study, SCCOSA will have a better idea of how this land serves as a resource to Bay Area wildlife, and how that can be maintained in the future. The results of this study will aid in land management decisions along upper Coyote Creek.

*When you walk by a power line, what do you see? And what do you think? You might be annoyed. You might be thankful for the electricity they provide. You might wonder if they're really necessary. Or, the lines might simply blend in with the urban landscape. When out in an open space, or driving, have you ever watched a bird maneuver around these lines? Ever wonder if they're going to make it? Thanks to a new project, SFBBO gets to find out.*

The Birds and Power Lines project is an exciting chance to examine the impact of

man-made structures on bird populations. Specifically, we are assessing the effectiveness of marked vs. unmarked power lines on preventing bird strikes for lines located around and near the Coyote Creek Field Station. The study is focused on birds striking the lines, as opposed to birds suffering electrocution from power lines. Electrocution only occurs if the bird were to hit two wires simultaneously. The fiber optic line along the top of the poles runs over the lines actually carrying the power. In an effort to prevent birds from striking the lines, every other segment of fiber optic line is marked with a thick plastic yellow spiral running parallel and surrounding the wire (See Fig 1). SFBBO is looking at whether or not these yellow markers are actually working.

Once per week, we search for dead or injured birds around and directly under these power lines. Four times per month around sunrise and sunset (and at night in the near future), we watch bird behavior as they approach the lines and we record whether they fly through, under, or over them or turn and go back the way they came after seeing the lines.

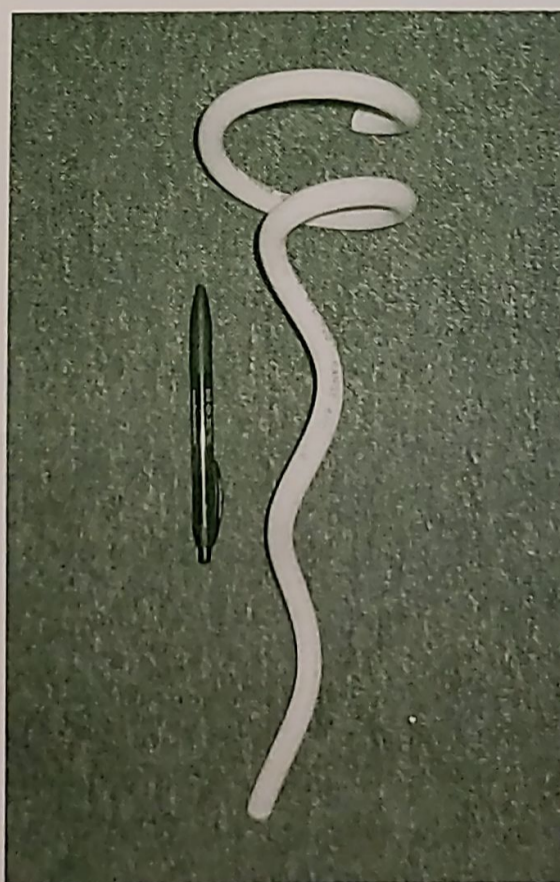


Figure 1

We will later add a radar component to help us focus our carcass searching efforts and nighttime behavior studies around high bird movement times. A mobile radar ornithology lab will help us see where the majority of bird movement is and if there is a concentration of movement over particular lines, particularly during migration. The mobile lab is a van with radar on top, connected to a computer inside that shows us what the radar is picking up. We also hope to use our bird banding data to give us a before and after picture of the effects of these lines on the bird populations captured at CCFS.

So far we have a wonderful team of volunteers who come help us on both of these projects, but we do need more. Bird identification skills aren't a requirement for volunteers - many of our needs require only observational and data recording skills, plus they are a great introduction to bird identification and the work SFBBO does. We need more data recorders on behavior survey days and area search days, and more carcass searchers. Since the rainy season is upon us, we have a greater need for volunteers to assist on make-up days after we cancel due to rain. If you are interested in helping out or would like more information please contact Gina Barton at [gbarton@sfbbo.org](mailto:gbarton@sfbbo.org).

We are in the process of collecting data, but will keep you informed on the results of our studies when they are complete. However, anyone who volunteers with the projects will get an up-close and personal view of what is going on out there. So the next time you drive or walk past a power line, notice if there are any markers on them, and what the birds are doing around the lines. And then, come out to work with the biologists and other volunteers to take a closer look at what's really going on around the lines. You'll never look at a power line the same way again.

~Gina Barton  
Biologist



## CHECK OUT THESE NEW PUBLICATIONS

New, upcoming publications from the Waterbird Department. Where you can find SFBBO in the world...

***Apparent hybrids between the American avocet and black-necked stilt in California.* J. Morlan, R.E. Dakin, and J. Rosso.**

Western Birds 35:57-59. 2004.



PHOTO BY DAVID CARDINAL

Remember that Stavocet from awhile back? It was a hybrid between an American Avocet and Black-necked Stilt. This wasn't a first, but it's definitely a rarity. Robin Dakin found the third hybrid in eastern SF Bay salt ponds in Alameda County while doing SFBBO

western snowy plover surveys. The publication compares plumage and foraging behavior of the avostilts/stavocets to a known hybrid from the San Francisco Zoo hatched in 1971. For more information see also:

<http://www.sfbbo.org/stavocet.htm>

***Forster's Tern, Caspian Tern, and California Gull Colonies in San Francisco Bay: Habitat Use, Numbers and Trends, 1982-2003.***

**C.M. Strong, L.B. Spear, T. P. Ryan, R. E. Dakin.**

Waterbirds, *in press*, expected release date December 2004.

We analyzed data on numbers of breeding terns and gulls and annual trends based on censuses of all colonies of the Caspian tern, Forster's tern, and California gull in the San Francisco Bay estuary from 1982 to 2003. The long-term data discussed in the paper provides some insight into recommendations for the salt pond restorations. We recommend that south bay salt pond restoration plans include the creation of sizeable tracts of islands specifically designed to provide nesting habitat for these terns.

***Western Snowy Plover Nesting Success and Avian Predator Surveys in the San Francisco Bay, 2004.* C.M. Strong and N. Wilson.**

A report to the USFWS Endangered Species Branch and the Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge. Expected release date December 2004.

SFBBO and the Refuge monitored the Pacific coast western snowy plover breeding population on the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge and the California Dept. of Fish and Game Eden Landing Ecological Reserve. We estimated nest and reproductive success, and assessed predator presence. For more information and data on the 2003 season, see: <http://www.sfbbo.org/plover.htm> Updates for 2004 nesting season coming soon to the website.

## NEW HABITAT, NEW HOME

*Continued from page 1*

to development of the restoration alternatives." Clearly we need additional support for the science necessary to bring about our restoration goals. We need to leverage the graduate students and academic capacity of our local universities.

If our best scientists are challenged by the magnitude and significance of the restoration, the public is even further from understanding the struggles, successes and the role the restoration will play in Bay Area history. Miles of trails will allow the public to visit wild places they have never imagined existing in their own region, and to view wildlife with which they may have no prior experience or context of understanding. Again, the NSP stated: "It is clear that major opportunities for the well being of the community maybe missed by neglecting to adequately anchor the restoration in either a broad historical context or a context that provides an environmental setting for the Bay Area community at large."

SFBBO is poised to function as the Project's primary independent science and education organization. SFBBO has been monitoring these ponds for over 20 years and we have the data to establish a scientific baseline against which to measure change. We have a current research presence in the south bay. This, combined with our wide ranging partnerships, our growing base of members and volunteers in the south bay and our Science Advisory Board, positions SFBBO to take a leadership role in the Project.

It is vital that SFBBO expand to meet this challenge and the first requirement is a larger, more accessible facility. There currently is no single venue providing comprehensive interpretation of the project to the general public. We welcome all of your suggestions and advice as we begin the search for a new home for SFBBO.

~Janet Hanson  
Executive Director



# Thanks to our California Fall Challenge

## 8th Annual Event

It was another year of "best ever" in the annals of SFBBO's California Fall Challenge! We are pleased to announce the CFC's best ever year for total funds raised at nearly \$33,000! There are still a few pledges out there to be collected so we will go just a bit higher.

The Fall Challenge success owes credit to a whole host of supporters. Those who chased down both birds and sponsors, those who led teams to find those birds, those who sponsored those chasers, ALL deserve a big round of applause!

Veteran CFC birder Bonnie Bedford-White repeated her shock-and-awe performance with an outstanding fundraising effort in the 2004 Challenge. With an amazing total of \$5,100, Bonnie was far out in front of

the pack on the race for prized Alaska trip aboard Discovery Voyages. Our top Rookie is new Board Member Lisa Myers, who won a beautiful jacket and duffle from Patagonia (for Alaska next year maybe!).

Excellent trip reports were received from Team Leaders Lisa Myers, Phil Gordon, Francis Toldi and Rick Fournier. Look for these "Rosetta Stones" to county birding in future editions of The Stilt.

And finally please join us in thanking the host of 2004 CFC Sponsors and in congratulating the 2004 California Fall Challenge Committee who spent many hours working together to bring you this "best ever" CFC.

~Janet Hanson  
Executive Director



Bonnie Bedford-White wins the Alaska Cruise for being the top fundraiser two years in a row.

### HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF COUNTY LIST

TEAM NAME	TRIP DATE	MEMBERS' NAMES (*CAPTAIN)	COUNTY	CO. TOTAL	NO. OF SPECIES SEEN	% OF LIST
The Refugees	Oct. 7, 2004	Mike Mammoser, Mike Rogers, Francis Toldi,	Merced	213	138	0.6479
Monterey		Scott Terrill, Steve Rovell, Mike Rogers	Monterey	292	178	0.6096
Vagrants	Sept. 25, 2004	Franco Toldi, Grant Hoyt, Dick Stovel	San Mateo	268	142	0.5299
Shasta County	Oct. 6, 2004	Bob and Carol Yutzzy	Shasta	244	128	0.5246
Camping Chickadees	Oct. 7, 2004	Sherry Hudson, Gina Barton, Alvaro Jaramillo	San Mateo	268	140	0.5224



# Volunteers

## OVERALL - Most Money Raised

1st	Bonnie Bedford-White	\$5,100.00
2nd	Mike Mammoser	\$2,739.00
3rd	Lou Young	\$2,328.00
4th	Lisa Myers	\$1,400.00
5th	Karen DeMello	\$1,200.00

## STAFF - Most Money Raised

1st	Sherry Hudson	\$4,001.00
2nd	Gina Barton	\$2,143.00
3rd	Janet Hanson	\$1,000.00
4th	Cheryl Strong	\$893.00

## MOST SPONSORS

Bonnie Bedford-White	100
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## \$500 Plus Club

Bonnie Bedford-White	\$5,100
Sherry Hudson	\$4,001
Mike Mammoser	\$2,739
Lou Young	\$2,328
Gina Barton	\$2,143
Lisa Myers	\$1,400
Janet Hanson	\$1,000
Cheryl Strong	\$893
Jan Hintermeister	\$875
Jennifer Krauel	\$830
Karim al-Khafaji	\$760
Gerry Ellis	\$603
Scott Terrill	\$500

## MOST SPECIES SEEN IN A SINGLE COUNTY

Scott Terrill,	
Steve Rovell,	
Mike Rogers	Monterey 178 species



Mike Mammoser and Francis Toldi receiving the Metwaldt Cup for the top birding team.



Lou Young and Jan Hintermeister receive a thank you for their many years of service.

## 2004 CFC COMMITTEE

Jan Hintermeister, Chair	Mike Mammoser Mark Paxton
Bonnie Bedford-White	Photos by Dave Johnston
Gerry Ellis	Web genius: Sharon Miyako
Alvaro Jaramillo	
Jennifer Krauel	

## 2004 CFC GUIDED TEAM LEADERS

Rick Fournier	Mark Paxton
Phil Gordon	Mike Rogers
Alvaro Jaramillo	Scott Terrill
Lisa Myers	Francis Toldi

## SAVE THE DATE

# SFBBO Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner FEBRUARY 16TH

*Details to be announced.  
Keep an eye on the website, enews, and  
your mailbox for more information.*



# 2004 FALL CHALLENGE SPONSORS

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*Biologist*  
Cheryl Strong  
*Biologist*  
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### From the Executive Director

If you wish to discuss any aspect of the Observatory's work, please write to me at [jthanson@sfbbo.org](mailto: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.

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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.



# Migrations

**W**e are pleased to introduce the newest members of SFBBO's Board of Directors:

**JOELLE BUFFA** is a wildlife biologist with the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

**S. B. MEYERS** is an engineer and a former ornithology student of R. Mewaldt. She lives in San Jose.

**LISA MYERS** is the owner of *Let's Go Birding*, a fledgling enterprise helping new birders get started with the sport.

**JOHN MCLEMORE** recently retired from business but is still politically active as a member of the Santa Clara City Council, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and several other nonprofit boards.

*Welcome to you all!*

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*Our profound gratitude goes to departing Board Members **JAN HINTERMEISTER** and **LOU YOUNG**. Both have made invaluable contributions to the Observatory, of their time and expertise. Their level of care and attention made much progress possible for SFBBO and we're pleased that they've both agreed to serve as ex officio board members.*

## STAFF NEWS

SFBBO Biologist **CHERYL STRONG** and husband Dave Thomson are expecting their first offspring in January 2005. (And yes, Snowy Plover surveys are still on!)

We welcome two new staff members: Biologist **ANNE HANSON**, Ph.D., a recent graduate from U.C. Davis in animal behavior, and **LAURA WEISS**, Education Specialist, who is a Peace Corps veteran.

SFBBO Outreach Specialist **SHARON MIYAKO** has accepted a part-time assignment while she pursues graduate work.

**ALVARO JARAMILLO** and his wife Kat welcomed son Pablo last year; Al acts as SFBBO's Interim Science Director while still leading selected international trips.

And we are sad to lose the multi-talented biologist and erstwhile office manager **ERIC FEUSS**, as he returns to the tech world at Adobe. We wish him and his family the best of luck and welcome him into his new role as one of SFBBO's most extraordinary volunteers!



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