

SAN FRANCISCO BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY NEWSLETTER

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

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MAY 1986

BAIR ISLAND STUDY

By Ed Roberts

On a day so beautiful it must have caused local Chamber of Commerce leaders to smile with pride, fifteen volunteers and sundry tools and materials were ferried to Bair Island aboard SFBBO's Avon inflatable boat. The purpose for this Saturday visit was to begin a pair of 1986 projects on terns and herons.

The work crew cleared vegetation from a levee to improve tern nesting habitat, put supports under the branches of deteriorating coyote brush in the heron colony and remodeled nesting platforms in the hope that Great Blue Herons will use them as nesting sites for the 1986 season. This was the initial effort in a program to enhance nesting sites for Least Terns, Caspian Terns, and the aforementioned herons.

The next work done in the two tern colonies involved a February trip to remove pickleweed from the Least Tern nesting colony and spread oyster shells on the surface of the two tern sites. If sufficient funds are obtained to accomplish all of the goals of the project we hope to place decoys in the colonies with loudspeakers to be set there as well. A cassette tape of "friendly tern calls" will be broadcast over the decoys in an attempt to entice the birds into using the two sites (which they did not do in 1985). We will make a weekly trip to the island to change the batteries of the cassette players and to observe and take censuses of the two colonies.

In the heron rookery, the coyote brush in which the Great Blue Herons, Snowy Egrets, and Black-crowned Night-Herons nest has been declining for the past decade or

more. The old shrubs are dying, their branches are collapsing and no new plants are sprouting to replace them. Competition from annual grasses has prevented new coyote brush from establishing on the Island and replacing the decaying older ones.

Coyote brush seeds were collected from plants on Bair Island by Michaelle Havenhill, Ed Roberts, and Peg



Marsha, Jennifer & Ralph Johnson, Barbara Cox and David & Roberta Seals clearing vegetation on the Caspian Tern nesting site. Photo by Susie Formenti.

Woodin during the winter of 1984-85. The seeds were planted and have been maintained in a greenhouse for transplanting on Bair Island in the fall of 1986.

Meanwhile, the supports under old plants and the man-made platforms are intended to provide useable nesting sites for the birds in the rookery until the new plants have grown large enough to support the enormous stick nests that the herons and egrets use year after year. Since some of the nests used by the Great Blue Herons in this colony are as large as forty-two inches in diameter, the success of this project depends upon maintaining what coyote brush remains and encouraging the birds to use the artificial platforms until the tiny seedlings have grown into mature plants.

Weekly trips will be made to the island during the spring and will include observation of the rookery to monitor the use of the platforms and the value of the supports. Work parties will re-enter the colony next October to plant the coyote brush seedlings.

Two to four volunteers are needed for the weekly trips to Bair Island; more for the trips to plant coyote brush. If you'd like to participate in one or more of these trips, and the opportunity to spend several hours looking at the varied and fascinating bird life of the island, call the Observatory office or contact Susie Formenti (408-779-8694) or Ed Roberts (415-793-5065).



*Nesting platforms constructed for Great Blue Herons.
Photo by Susie Formenti.*

These projects are off to a good start thanks to the efforts of the following people: Barbara Cox, Derek Currall, Jason & Susie Formenti, Felipa Harer, Michaelle Havenhill, Marsha, Jennifer & Ralph Johnson, Paul Noble, Ed Roberts, Dave & Roberta Seals, Michael Stahler, and Peg Woodin. ■

SAN FRANCISCO BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY

T O U R S

BY DON STARKS

SFBBO announces another year of Bird Tours beginning with a trip to Arizona in March. These tours welcome the novice, old pro, senior citizens, students, campers, or anyone interested in natural history, especially birds. The cost of each tour includes all camp site reservations and fees, museum entrance fees, and the guidance of two tour leaders. Not included in the cost are meals, transportation, and sundry items such as beverages, etc.

ARIZONA March 22-30 Leader: Don Starks

This trip is a perfect compliment to our August trip; cooler weather easing into the desert spring. Taking advantage of Easter vacation we will visit the Salton Sea and Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument as well as many of the famous spots in Southeast Arizona; Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, Madera Canyon, etc.

\$300/person

MICHIGAN

June 14-22 \$

Leaders: Don Starks and Tom Heatley

Join Don and one of Michigan's top birders to search for Kirtland's Warbler, our target bird. We'll be touring the Northern woods looking for such specialities as Mourning Warbler, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and many Eastern birds.

\$895 (1st class) \$350 (adventurers)/person

WEST TEXAS May 10-18 Leader: TBA

Starting from El Paso, we'll be visiting the Davis Mountains and the Chisos Mountain of Big Bend National Park. Colima Warbler and Lucifer Hummingbird are target birds, but it's also a visit to a largely unappreciated habitat - the Chihuahua Desert and Carlsbad Caverns if time permits.

TBA

TEXAS COAST

Date to be announced(Dec.-Jan.)

Leader: Don Starks

If you have only done the Texas Coast and the Rio Grande Valley in the spring, you aren't done yet! Whooping Cranes wintering sparrows, Mexican wanderers and more to delight the birder. This trip is in the planning stages, so if you're interested let us know.

TBA

DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL MONUMENT

May 23-27 Leader: **Bruce LaBar**

A Memorial Day weekend tradition - Death Valley and Bruce go hand in hand. Get these two together and you'll be guaranteed rare birds. Meet some of California's best in birds and birders.

\$35/person

SALTON SEA

April 25-28 Leader: **Dan Singer**

A great trip with high potential for rare strays. Besides the Sea we will also visit Joshua Tree National Monument and Morongo Valley. This is a truly enjoyable trip. We'll be seeing winter visitors as well as spring migrants. Two years ago we got most of the western warblers.

\$90/person

YOSEMITE June 27-30 Leader: Bruce LeBar

The perennial favorite. You simply can't go wrong on this trip. We saw Great Gray and Pygmy Owls last year. As usual we'll also visit the east side of the Sierra to get some of the Great Basin specialties. Always beautiful, always worth another visit.

\$90/person

ARIZONA

August 9-17

Leaders: **Dan Singer and Bruce LaBar**

You should have been on last year's trip. It was a great hummingbird trip; the best being Plain-capped Starthroat and White-eared. What will this year offer? Only the best, I'm sure. Don't miss it.

\$300/person

CREIGHTON RANCH NATURE CONSERVANCY

May 17-18

Leaders: **Don Starks and Bob Hansen**

An overnight visit to one of California's disappearing habitats - Central Valley Oak woodlands. The Creighton Ranch and Kaweah Oaks are two preserves owned by the Nature Conservancy and located near Visalia. A new trip and a special price.

\$25/person

If you are interested in any of these tours and would like more information and a brochure, please call or write Don Starks, 2076 Foxworthy Ave., San Jose, CA 95124, (408) 371-9720



OWL PELLETS NEEDED

The Environmental Education Center in Alviso needs a constant supply of owl pellets for use with school children in the lab. The Center teaches owl pellet dissection as part of the environmental curriculum.

Old barns, windmill towers, and under owl nests in trees are good places to look. Pellets can be brought to the SFBBO monthly meetings at the EEC or dropped off at the Bird Observatory office for pickup. Please call Karen or Fran at the Center, 408-262-5513, for directions for delivery or pickup.

Classes & Trips

Wildlife Rescue, Inc. will be offering Wildlife Care classes for volunteers on Thursday evenings at 7:30 p.m. starting on April 10. These classes will run until August 28. If you would like to volunteer to help care for injured or orphaned wild birds and mammals at our shelter or raise them in your home, these classes will train you to do so.

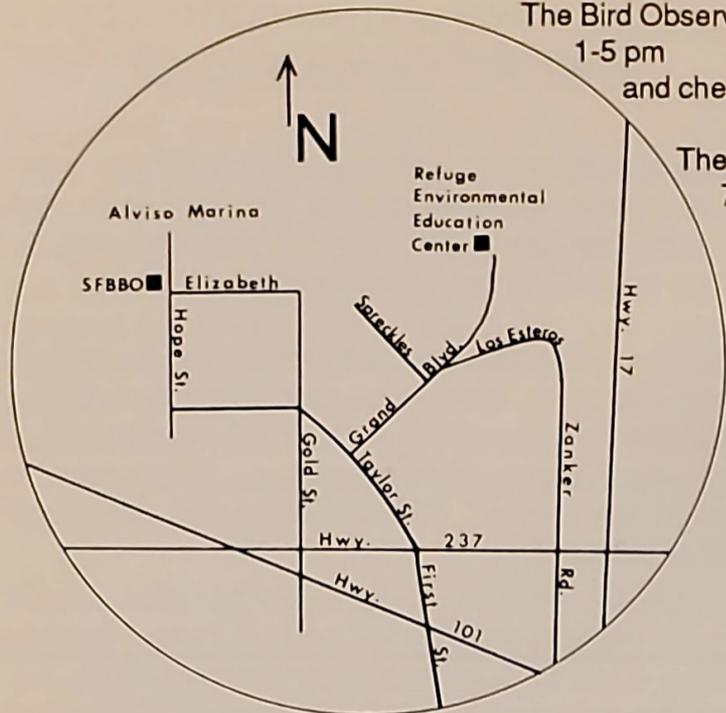
The classes will cover a variety of topics including the care of many different species of local wildlife. The class fee is only \$3 for members of Wildlife Rescue, Inc. and \$18 for non-members (this includes an individual membership and the opportunity to attend as many classes as you wish). Wildlife Rescue, Inc. is a non-profit volunteer organization working under State and Federal permits. We are located at Suite T-7, 4000 Middlefield Rd., Palo Alto. To register for the classes call 415-494-7926.

Sunbeam Ecology Explorations is offering a trip to Southeastern Arizona from May 24 to June 1.

They will visit Aravaipa Canyon and nearby areas for Common Black Hawks and Mississippi Kites. Chino and Madera Canyons may produce Black-capped Gnatcatchers and Elf Owls. Two days in the Nogales/Patagonia area should bring forth such birds as Rose-throated Becard and Thick-billed Flycatcher, Painted Redstart and a variety of hummers. The Chiricahuas and intervening areas will be searched for Scaled Quail, Red-faced and Olive Warblers and the Mexican Chickadee.

The trip cost will be \$525 which will include air fare and motels (double occupancy). Van rental and food costs will be borne by participants. The leaders are Maryann Danielson and Jean-Marie Spoelman. For additional information, call Maryann Danielson at (415) 342-6919.

The Bird Observatory office is located at 1290 Hope St. in Alviso. The office is open from 1-5 pm weekdays and some weekends. But before stopping in, call (408) 946-6548 and check the schedule.



The General Membership meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm at the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Environmental Education Center in Alviso. (see map) The Board meetings are open to the membership and are held monthly. Call the Observatory for dates and times.

The newsletter deadline is the first Monday of the month. Send contributions to the editor: Susie Formenti, 16675 Buckskin Ct., Morgan Hill, CA 95037.

The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory is a non-profit corporation under IRS statute 501(c)3. All memberships and contributions are tax deductible.

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Thursday, May 1, 1986

Refuge Environmental Education Center
in Alviso

7:30 pm

FEATURED SPEAKER:

Breck Tyler of the Santa Cruz Marine Laboratory will present a program on Mist Netting Landbirds in a Coastal Wetlands.

DONATIONS. . . Thanks to Lorrie Emery, Marilyn Fowler and J. W. & Hazel Tilden for the refreshments for the April General Meeting.

THANKS. . . The editor would like to give special thanks to Barbara Cox, Pat & Jean Dubois and Phyllis Browning for their hard work in getting the April newsletter mailed.

Also thanks to John Lemmons for all the construction work he has done around the Cannery building and Jean Dubois for his assistance with the plumbing .

Volunteers are always needed. If you would like to volunteer your time in the office, please call the Bird Observatory.

Look At Your Newsletter Mailing Label Closely

SFBBO depends on your continued support to carry out its many projects and studies. As a reminder when your membership renewal is due, check your newsletter mailing label for a clue. If it says, "Thank you for your support!" thats great. If it says, "Your Dues are Due", won't you please continue your support.

Editor, Susie Formenti



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

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE (____) _____

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

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

* Single payment becomes part of an endowment fund.