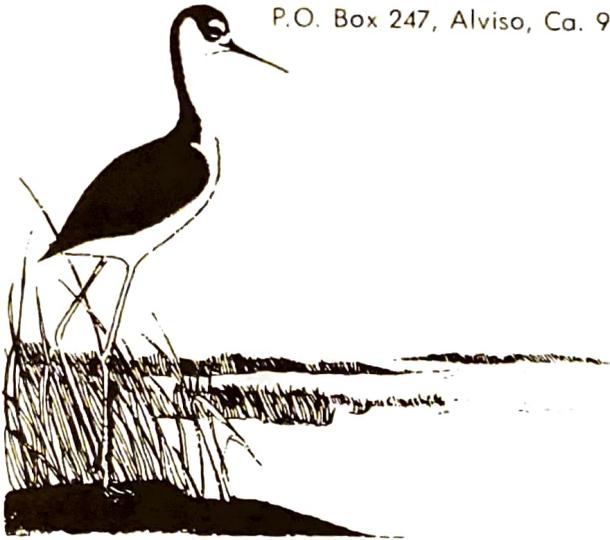


# SAN FRANCISCO BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY NEWSLETTER

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

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January/February 1991

## RUFIOUS-CROWNED SPARROW

by Paul L. Noble and Don Starks

A beautiful day on the sage covered hillside at Santa Teresa Park. Warm, no breeze, quiet to the point that you're able to hear bugs walk a hundred yards away. You know what I like best about the area? The smell of the tar weed on a warm day. Boy, do I hate getting out of the office or what! Paul Noble and I were busying ourselves with baiting and checking traps for Rufous-crowned Sparrows. I had just finished shutting down the traps located on the eastern end of the study site and Paul was finishing up on the western end when he let out an excited whoop. "Either the Giants just won the pennant or you saw a big rattler." I exclaimed calmly meaning better him than me. Indeed we have wondered why we haven't encountered more snakes on the hillside; it was a big one and the only one we've seen so far. Things like that tend to wake up a lazy day.

That day we didn't catch any sparrows. We have become a bit more patient in our plans for this study. We have found that these feathered devils don't fall over themselves to be the first in the traps; or the last. To date we've caught over a dozen with numerous recaptures and we feel pretty good about those numbers. No trapping was attempted from late spring until our August picnic because we felt that insects were being sought by adults feeding young. On September 6 Paul and Mike Mammoser went out and captured four Rufous-crowned

and two White-crowned as a bonus.

What interesting things have we found out? For starters wing measurements are longer than those given in Peter Pyle's book, "*Identification Guide to North American Passerines*". We feel that may be due to the subspecies that was measured. Since this bird is sedentary and is composed of many subspecies a lot of geographical variation is the norm.

As we head into winter we plan to accelerate our efforts of banding and observing those that we have banded. As you may know we have been color banding individuals for recognition purposes. In the future, after we've banded a good number, we hope to obtain more information about territory size, birds per acre, winter territory (if it exists) versus breeding and other things that are poorly known about this bird. So far, the birds have been very quiet and secretive this fall and winter. They don't show much of themselves and you only know of their presence when they give their characteristic "dear, dear" call note. As we turn the curve of winter and head into early spring we will again hear their song and see the territorial males perching on the tops of serpentine outcrops and sagebrushes. We go out about twice a week to bait and/or trap, so if you are interest in getting involved in this project call the Bird Observatory office. ■

# San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

## 1991 Classes and Tours

The following list of classes are being offered as a tool to sharpen your bird identification skills and aid volunteers that are working on Bird Observatory projects. These classes are not limited to SFBBO members. If you are not a member your class fee includes a one year membership to the Observatory. Classes begin at 7:30 p.m. at the Bird Observatory office. All proceeds support the Observatory's projects and are tax-deductible. For more information and to sign up call the Observatory at (408) 946-6548.

**Gull Identification**      Don Starks      January 16 - February 20, 1991

For anyone working with gulls or just interested in this difficult group, this may be just the class for you. The class consists of five evening meetings as well as a field trip. Emphasis will be placed on identifying age as well as seasonal differences. Here in the bay area we have about twelve species of gulls that are all similar in appearance. So, join Don as he wades through the intricacies of gull identification. Don is the Executive Director of SFBBO and has been teaching gull identification classes for more than five years. \$35 members, \$50 non-members

**Owl Biology**      Paul Noble      February 27 - March 13, 1991

This is a repeat of Paul's very popular Owl class that was offered in 1990. He will again present the biology, behavior, as well as identification of the owls of North America with emphasis on those forms that occur here in the bay area. An optional field trip for class members only is offered at a later time for those who hope to see a Flammulated Owl; a difficult but desirable owl for most birders to see. Paul is the Board President of SFBBO and has published journal articles about owls of the bay area. \$35 members, \$50 non-members

**Taxidermic Techniques**      Dave Martin      April 4 - April 20, 1991

In this class students will be taken through the steps necessary to prepare a museum quality bird, mammal, and reptile/amphibian specimen. In addition techniques involved with preparing skeletal specimens will be emphasized. The latest in other museum techniques will be taught. Most hard to get materials, books, and specimens to be prepared will be supplied by SFBBO. Students will be expected to supply some supplies. Class size will be limited to 10 people to accomodate more individual attention. The class will consist of three evening meetings and three Saturday "labs". Dave Martin is the curator of the vertebrate museum at San Jose State University and also teaches classes in museum methods. \$90 members, \$105 non-members.

**Sparrow Identification**      Don Starks      May 9 - May 30, 1991

This class will emphasize the more typical sparrows that are seen in the bay area and the west. As many of you know, sparrows are one of the more difficult birds when it comes to separating similar species. So more time will be spent on the hard to identify species and less on the obvious. The class will consist of five evening lectures and two field trips. \$35 members, \$50 non-members

**Flycatcher Identification**      Paul Noble      May 22 - June 5, 1991

If you have ever struggled over an unidentified Empidonax flycatcher in migration, or wrestled with a puzzling Myiarchus on a dry hillside in a Southern California desert, then you know that this class can help you become more familiar with the family Tyrannidae. This family is one of the most difficult from top to bottom; phoebes, empids, kingbirds, pewees, and the genus Myiarchus have all given birders problems. The class will consist of three evening lectures and one field trip. \$35 members, \$50 non-members

**Shorebird Identification**      Paul Noble      August 14 - September 4, 1991

Sharpen your skills on peeps as well as the larger shorebirds. This class will consist of four evening lectures. Museum skins will be used to familiarize you with the small feathers (such as scapulars) that you need to know for identification. The class will consist of four evening lectures and one field trip. \$50 members, \$65 non-members

**Duck Identification** Paul Noble November 6 and 13, 1991

If you have difficulty identifying female ducks or separating the two scaups, then this course will be beneficial to you. This class will deal with North American ducks and will emphasize females and males in eclipse plumage. Emphasis will also be placed on separating the adults of confusing species such as scaups, mergansers and goldeneyes. The class will consist of four evening lectures and one field trip. \$30 members, \$45 non-members

**SFBBO TOURS** are offered as a service to our members and to the general public. These are basically no frills camping/birding tours except for the very long distance such as Michigan when motels will be used. With that in mind these tours cater to the independent camper and traveler. Fees cover the cost of the organizer/guide and campground/museum fees. Costs can be further cut by sharing rides and cost of meals. Families with kids are also welcome and we almost always camp near enough motels that they are a viable option to camping if you so choose. There is a 10% refundable deposit required on tours. For more information or to sign up call the Bird Observatory office at (408) 946-6548.

**So. California Deserts** Don Starks & Paul Noble March 15- 18, 1991

This camping and bird bash will take us to Joshua Tree National Monument, the Salton Sea, and the thriving metropolis of Maricopa. That's right, all for thrashers (hopefully). We hope to see Bendire's, Crissal, and Le Conte's, respectively. At this time of year they are most vocal and thereby easier to find. This is a camping tour so be prepared to camp in reserved group camps or stay in nearby motels and meet us along the way. The Salton Sea is very good this time of the year for waterfowl as well as shorebirds, so this promises to be a very good birding weekend. \$50 members, \$65 non-members

**East Texas** Don Starks & Paul Noble April 20-28, 1991 (Extension April 29 - May 2)

An area that all birders dream about, beginners and old pros alike, is east Texas in April and May. Besides resident birds of the Gulf, coastal migration is in full swing and if the weather is right, a birder can get a "fallout" of exhausted migrants that dazzle the eye. Our last tour to this area was 1985 and is still talked about. Shorebirds, gulls, warblers, sparrows galore. The upper Texas coast near Houston will be emphasized as well as the hill country around Austin. If you've never been or want to go again, I guarantee a trip to be remembered as one of the best of your birding trips. The extension trip visits the lower Rio Grande Valley and all the Mexican specialties that it has to offer. A hint of the taste of the American tropics. \$400 members, \$415 non-members (Extension \$150)

**Michigan** Don Starks & Tom Heatley June 22 - 30, 1991

Tom is one of the best birders in the country and is one of the top five listers for his home state of Michigan. Henslow's Sparrow, Ruffed Grouse, Spruce Grouse, Mourning, Connecticut, and Kirtland's Warblers are just a few of the birds you will see. Don't forget all the breeding birds of the eastern forests. It promises to be a good trip. This trip starts in Detroit and we will be staying in motels throughout. Price includes lodging. Meals and transportation not included. \$750 members, \$765 non-members

**Southeast Arizona** Don Starks & Paul Noble August 3 - 11, 1991

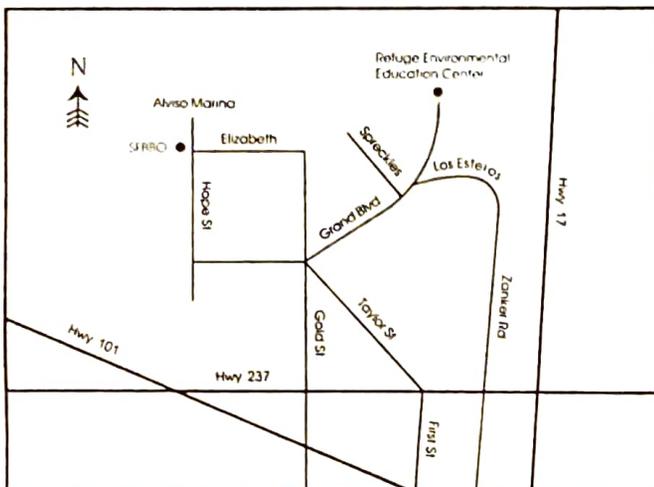
This trip is the final of our trips for 1991. This time of the year Arizona produces more of the typical Mexican specialties that can't be found at other times of the year anywhere else in North America. Things have changed ornithologically as well as meteorologically at this time of year in Arizona. Believe it or not, this is the time of year Arizona undergoes its second spring. Huge storm clouds come from out of the Gulf of Mexico, which produces rain that turns the landscape a lush green. The birds are great and so is the camping. \$170 members, \$185 non-members

The Bird Observatory 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 biannually. The Board meetings are open to the membership and are held monthly. Call the Observatory office for dates and times.

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

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



### Knapp Study

Survey trips for the Knapp Study are continuing every other Sunday starting at 8:00 a.m. Listed below are dates scheduled through the month of April 1991. Your help is needed, no matter what your level of experience. If you are interested in this study, contact the Bird Observatory office at (408) 946-6548.

- Sunday February 10
- Sunday February 24
- Sunday March 10
- Sunday March 24
- Sunday April 7
- Sunday April 21

## From the Executive Directors Desk

by Don Starks

Little did I realize that when I wrote "A Portfolio for Giving" in a previous Newsletter (Vol 9 #6) that I would get the response that I did. The most common response was "Yeah, I have that problem too". Meaning, of course, every one of us has many organizations tugging at our hearts as well as our pocket books. Well, this update is directed to our older members. I just read an article in the December 1990 issue of Money magazine that concerns itself with giving. The title of the article is "Charitable Gifts that Pay You Back". Besides describing gift annuities, pooled income funds, and other tools for giving it contains a list of 100 of the larger charities in which people might be interested in giving. Most interesting, this list states if the charity is in "good standing" with "watchdogs". It proved very surprising to me to find out that some organizations were not as squeaky clean as you might expect. Get the magazine (at your local library) and see for yourself.

This article seemed to be aimed more at the retired folks in our population. You all know of course that our increasing population is, on the average, becoming older; the graying of America. Well, says I, great! Experience counts. I'm only hoping that the graying of America can help the greening of America. God knows we need the help.

I can't stress enough how important it is to put your money where your heart is. If you believe in an organization's works - donate. But first, do a little research just as you would before investing. It's funny, people will research for weeks before investing, but donate without thinking because they feel that if it's a charity, it's got to be ok. Not so. So, simply stated, think before you act. ■

#### San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

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1290 Hope Street  
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408-946-6548

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

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

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



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

\* Single payment becomes part of an endowment fund.