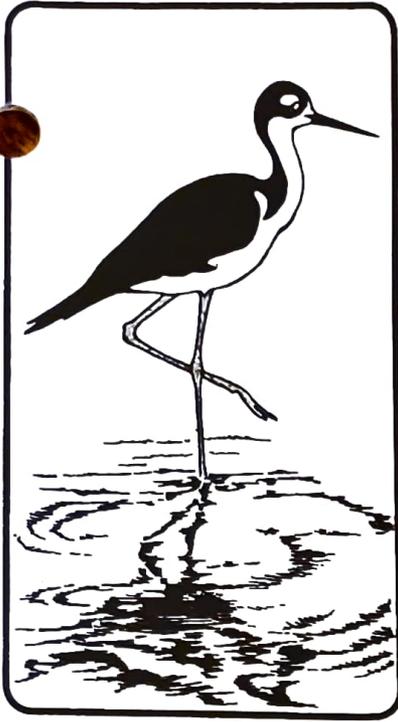


The Stilt

The Newsletter of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

Vol. 15 No. 1

Spring 1996



Vicki R. Jennings

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Watching a New Wetland

by Virginia Becchine

While in the field gathering data for monitoring projects, many field observers develop a passion for a particular place or habitat. From a research viewpoint, we are always interested in how land is currently being managed, but understanding its history increases our depth of appreciation. Many of our readers have expressed interest in the parcel of land known variably as "Calabazas Marsh", "the Sammis property", or "that great birding area right beside 237".....

In the mid 1980's I was recruited by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to participate in a 5 year study of diked baylands. As a volunteer I was to census the birds that used 4 areas of diked baylands in the south bay. All four sites were located adjacent to Highway 237 at the south end of the bay by Alviso. One of the four parcels was the Sammis property. This property consisted of 24 acres of brackish seasonal wetlands with the remaining acres being grassy upland habitat. The Calabazas Marsh (aka Sammis property) has an interesting history and I would like to report my observations.

I do not know when this particular piece of property was diked off from the bay, but according to historical maps of the area, at least a portion of it was tidal marsh. In the late 1800's the marshes began being divided up by levees.

Today eighty-five to ninety percent of all the original tidal marsh around the San Francisco Bay has been filled in or is currently diked off from the bay. Many of these diked areas have been filled in and developed. Other areas were flooded and are still being used for salt production. The Sammis property had culverts [large pipes] in the levees but these were nonfunctional and did not allow tidal flow in and out of the area. In the winter the property ponded with water, but in the summer it dried out. So, the wetland was seasonal due to the lack of tidal flow and the seasonal nature of California's rainfall. It was brackish because the salty soil was diluted with fresh rainwater.

The first time I walked the Sammis property was in the fall of 1984. My first survey of the property was on

Continued on Page 2



The mitigation area, 1996. Photo by Alan Walther.

Oct 1, 1984 and I was to record no ponding of water and a truck dumping fill dirt into the area. By the end of December the rains had caused 40% ponding. After 6 census days that fall I had a long species list for the diked-in area. Using the pond were Mew and California gulls as well as unidentified gull species. (Ring-billed, Herring, Western and Glaucous-winged gulls were added to the list later.) Around the edges of the pond and in the shallow areas I noted Black-necked Stilt, Back-bellied Plover, Dowitcher sp., Killdeer, American Pipit, Long-billed Curlew. The list of raptors using the area included Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, White-tailed Kite, Red-tailed Hawk and Turkey Vulture. Also listed were Ring-necked Pheasant, Song Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Mourning Dove, Rock Dove, Violet-green Swallow, Black Phoebe, Loggerhead Shrike, Western Meadowlark, House Finch, Northern Mockingbird, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. I was given slides of a Ross' Goose that was seen on the site in 1983 but I was never to record that species.

Today eighty-five to ninety percent of all the original tidal marsh around the San Francisco Bay has been filled in or is currently diked off from the bay.

In January of 1985 The Lee Sammis Company proposed development of the Moffett Technology Center, a light industrial/research project on this site. To develop the property they needed to add fill and raise the elevation 3 or 4 feet. Since 24 acres of the proposed fill area were wetlands, an Army Corps of Engineers' permit was required. To fill a wetlands, an application has to be filed with the Army Corps of Engineers in accordance with the provisions of Section 10 of the River and Harbors Act of 1899 and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1972. When planning to fill wetlands, mitigation is proposed. The goal of mitigation is to lessen the impact caused by the loss of the wetland habitat by the creation and/or protection of similar habitat at another site. This project proposed a donation of money that could be used for acquisition and/or enhancement of wetlands in Santa Clara or San Mateo County.

During the winter of 1985 the site was

ponded approximately 25-30%. During the winter and early spring, I added the following species: American Avocet, Dunlin, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Northern Pintail, Mallard, Gadwall, American Coot, Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shoveler, Greater Yellowlegs, Least and Western Sandpiper, Cliff and Barn Swallow, Lesser Goldfinch, Savannah Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird and American Kestrel. On January 13, I recorded 49 Black-bellied Plovers and on January 27, I recorded 58. In February I also observed garbage — it looked as if a private citizen had driven up on the dike and dumped their household refuse. Also in February, I saw a man standing on the dike firing a gun at cans in the wetlands.

In March I recorded the first Burrowing Owl and noted that the area looked as though it had been diked. Also in March, the Army Corps of Engineers gave the Lee Sammis Company the opportunity to resolve or rebut the objections and/or adverse comments made in response to their January 1985 permit application. In March the ponding was down to 10% and by mid May it was back to zero. People who view seasonal wetlands only in the summer months have a very limited view of what the land is like. For example, on June 16, 1985 at 7:30 in the morning on a clear and hot day, I recorded one Killdeer, one Ring-necked Pheasant and 25 House Finches. Two Burrowing Owls were on the dikes

and 100 Cliff Swallows were flying over the property. To some it might appear that the diked-in area didn't support much bird life. One needs to view the land year round to appreciate its seasonal nature. One winter I recorded 1,500 gulls in the pond.

The two creeks and adjacent creek habitat supported a large number of species and a separate species list was maintained. Some of the highlight species include: Sora and Virginia Rail, Marsh Wren, Green-winged Teal, Ruddy Duck, Western Grebe, Caspian and Forster's terns, Tricolored Blackbird and Salt Marsh Yellowthroat. There was a nesting colony of swallows under the bridge at Calabazas Creek and under the bridge at San Tomas Aquino Creek. Large numbers of Red-winged Blackbirds used the reeds adjacent to the creeks as a nocturnal roost. Every so often when I censused the property, I noticed that one side of a creek had been scraped clean of vegetation. I learned this was done by the water district to ensure the creeks could handle the water flow in the rainy season.

It was now the start of my second year of observation. This fall there had been less rain and the ponding was only 15% by early December. But the winter was a very wet one with above average rainfall. On January 10, 1986 the ponding had increased to 20% and the Dowitchers sp. count was 230. On February 22, 50% of the site was ponded with water and 45%



The mitigation area, 1988. Photo by V. Becchine.

of the remaining ground was saturated with water. On February 27, the draining began. I was there when the truck drove up on the dike and watched as they placed a large hose into the wetlands and another in Calabazas Creek. The water from the wetlands was then pumped into Calabazas Creek. In 1986 the Army Corps of Engineers did not consider draining a wetland to be in violation of the Clean Water Act, as they do today. On the day the drainage began, Pied-billed Grebe was added to the species list.

As the winter progressed the amount of ponding on my other 3 diked bayland areas continued to increase, but the Sammis property dropped down to 10%. In April of 1986 my other 3 sites were 100% ponded, 95% ponded and 40% ponded, but the Sammis site had been drained and no ponding was noted. February 1986 seemed to be a turning point. The amount of ponded water on the site would now remain low for years due to decreased rainfall and drainage by the owner. And the site was beginning to be degraded by off-road vehicles. On February 22, a Great Egret, 13 Gadwalls and 63 Long-billed Curlews were feeding and roosting in the pond area when they were disturbed by a motorcycle. They all flew off.

People who view seasonal wetlands only in the summer months have a very limited view of what the land is like.

The following November the owner applied for another fill permit from the Army Corps of Engineers, and changes had been made in the proposed project. The project still called for the filling of the entire site and the building of a light industrial complex, but Caltrans would now be using 8.3 acres of this site for the proposed interchange at State Highway 237 and the Great America Parkway. (Caltrans later altered its plans and this intersection was deleted.) The proposed mitigation was also changed. Now 11.2 acres in and along the creeks and dikes that surround the site was offered as on-site mitigation, as well as 22.2 acres of off-site mitigation located 12 miles north in Union City. Respondants to the permit application requested that a public hearing be held to discuss this project. I reported my observations at this meeting.

By the winter of 1987 the property had been further degraded by off-road

vehicles. Motorcycles and 4-wheel drive vehicles denuded areas of pickleweed. Wheel tracks could be seen up and down the dikes and all across the wetland area. Three of the four dikes had known Burrowing Owl burrows in them. An old oil drum with the word "Motorcross" painted on it was lying in the wetland where the pickleweed once grew. More and more garbage was being dumped on the property. The water district had a fence to prevent access to the dikes that surround the property, but the gate in the fence was repeatedly broken down. The wildlife disappeared. I was to add only one more species to the Sammis property list, an Anna's Hummingbird was added in August of 1987.

A year and a half later, in September of 1988 because of opposition and unresolved issues relating to the October 1986 proposal to fill the wetlands, the owner now made major revisions in the proposed project. The Moffett Technology Center was still to be built on site, however, this time the proposal was to fill only 3.3 acres of wetlands and the mitigation was to convert 3.3 acres of on-site uplands to on-site wetlands. The property would be roughly divided in half with the northern portion to remain wetlands and the southern portion adjacent to Highway 237 to be filled and developed. Some months later I noticed a "For Sale" sign on the property.

In January of 1989 the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for Caltrans' proposal to enlarge Highway 237 was completed. The project called for the filling of some 17.4 acres of seasonal wetlands and 1.2 acres of brackish riparian habitat. This loss of wetlands called for mitigation and the Sammis property was one of the proposed sites. The plan proposed creation of 22.5 acres of new wetlands and enhancement of an additional 22.4 acres of existing wetlands. The DEIR described the Sammis property as a seasonal wetland that had been heavily disrupted over the past few years. The last day I censused the property for the Fish and Wildlife Service was August 7, 1989. I recorded thousands of Pygmy Blue Butterflies, the smallest butterfly in North America, hovering around the remaining areas of pickleweed.

I returned to the property on January 8, 1993, 3 1/2 years after I had last walked the dikes and eight years since I had first walked the property. Caltrans had purchased the property, the mitigation was finished and we had had our first

year of decent rain in six years. Between January 8 and May 16, I surveyed the property 6 times for SFBBO's high-tide shorebird roost study. Although I was out to count shorebirds, I listed all the species I saw. In January, I recorded 1000+ gulls, 18 Killdeer, 1 White-tailed Kite, 2 Rock Doves and 53 Northern Shovelers. During the following surveys my species list grew to include, Pied-billed Grebe, Mallard, Gadwall, Ruddy Duck, Cinnamon Teal, Blue-winged Teal, Caspian and Forster's terns, Dowitcher sp., Dunlin, Western and Least sandpipers, Greater Yellowlegs, Willet, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Semipalmated Plover, American Coot, Cliff Swallow, American Pipit, Loggerhead Shrike, House Finch, Lesser Goldfinch, Red-winged Blackbird, Golden-crowned Sparrow, and American Crow.

The goal of mitigation is to lessen the impact caused by the loss of the wetland habitat by the creation and/or protection of similar habitat at another site.

February 5 was an outstanding day for raptors. That day alone I recorded a Peregrine Falcon, a White-tailed Kite, a Northern Harrier, a Golden Eagle and a few Turkey Vultures. I watched as a Golden Eagle hunted, killed and ate a jack rabbit. I was intrigued by how long the eagle mantled its prey before it began to eat. February 5 was also the day I first recorded a red fox on the property. On February 20, a Burrowing Owl was added to the new species list. This diked bayland was once again a vital wildlife habitat.

Ginny Becchine is a Member of the SFBBO Board of Directors, Past President and a Life Member. She underplays her role concerning the 237 mitigation area: — she was instrumental in the decision to restore the wetland.

Matching Funds Gift

Apple Computer, Inc., thanks due to Robin and Steve Dakin.

Does your employer offer a matching funds program or have a corporate giving program? If so, please contact the Observatory for more information on corporate partnerships.

Understanding the Hwy. 237 Mitigation Site

This squarish wetland is now easily visible from the new elevated section of westbound 237, which probably explains the increased amount of interest in it. The property consists of 50 acres, bordered on the south by 237, on the west by Calabazas Creek and on the north and east by San Tomas Aquino Creek. There are overflow channels between the creeks and the marsh as insurance against flooding; they are managed by the Santa Clara Valley Water District. The marsh is accessible by parking at Sunnyvale Baylands Park, on Carribbean Drive, and then walking or biking east on the frontage road; or by utilizing the trail that follows San Tomas Aquino Creek under 237 if coming from the 3Com area. The entire marsh is bordered by an unpaved trail that is approximately 1 mile in length.

The site was opened to tidal action in January 1993. After a monitoring period of 5 years, title to the land will be turned over to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the area will become part of the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

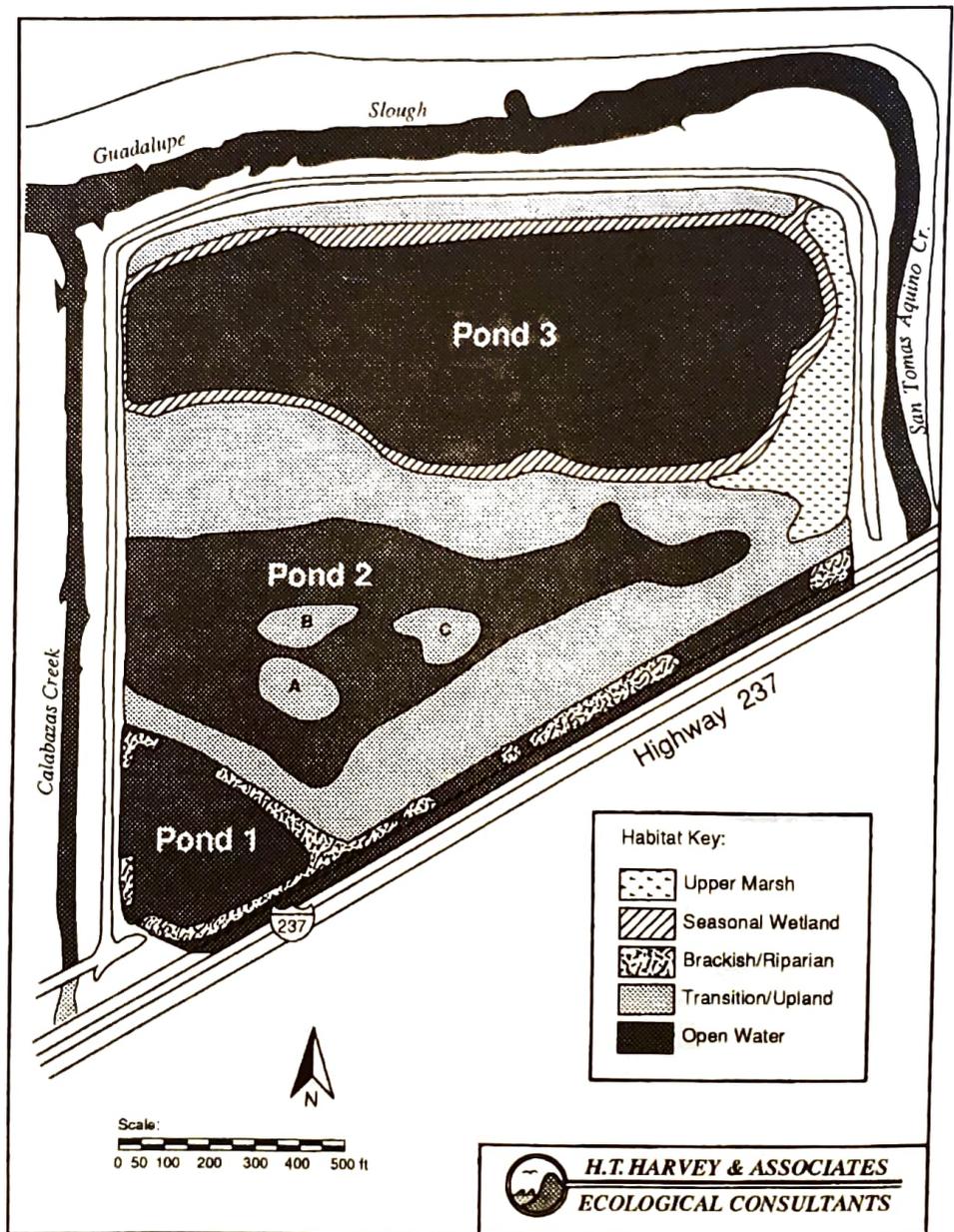
The restoration plan created 3 pond areas: the first is a triangular pond in the southwest corner that is deep, brackish water and highly favored by waterfowl. Looking northward, pond #2 is the middle area containing three islands. It is a shallow brackish shorebird and waterfowl pond, receiving a managed flow of water from pond #1, plus rainfall. The northeastern section is pond #3, intended as a seasonal shorebird and waterfowl pond and salt panne, with a saltmarsh fringe. No water is provided except as overflow from pond #2 and as rainfall. A one-way flap gate located near the confluence of the two creeks was installed to give excess water egress.

All the locally common waterfowl and shorebirds have been observed here, including a magnificent flock of foraging American White Pelicans. Highlights of SFBBO's spring 1995 shorebird count of the area by Steve Shunk and Mark Strasberger: 480 small sandpipers and 3 Spotted Sandpipers; fall 1995 by Sue Macias and Sandy Cortez: 80 Long-billed

Curlews, 279 Western Sandpipers, 100 Dowitcher sp.

References:
 Highway 237 wetland mitigation site. 1993 annual monitoring report. Prepared for Caltrans and the San Jose State University Foundation, by H.T. Harvey and Associates, Philip Williams and Associates, San Jose State University. Project No. 506-10.

We thank Caltrans environmental biologists Sid Shadle and Beverly McIntosh; and Ron Duke of H.T. Harvey and Associates for their assistance in presenting this information.



Map of 237 mitigation area, reprinted courtesy of H.T. Harvey and Associates.

H.T. HARVEY & ASSOCIATES
 ECOLOGICAL CONSULTANTS

How to Spot An Owl

A Book Review by Paul L. Noble

Owl enthusiasts will be pleased with a new entry into the "How to Spot" series of field guides/reference books. Authored by Patricia and Clay Sutton, *How to Spot an Owl* is an informative guide to finding the common and not so easily seen species of owls in North America.

The book is treated in two parts. In part one the authors introduce the reader to owling basics with a brief natural history of owls in general, describing flight, diet and methods of predation. Nesting and chick rearing is also explained. Methods of finding owls on your own are described by informing the reader as to owls' activity patterns, roosting sites and hunting for owl signs including pellet identification. Additional advice on finding nesting owls is also included. The authors' personal experiences are often given in reference to a particular activity described.

The book also covers owling etiquette and how over-zealous owlers have been guilty of disturbing nesting owls, with trespassing privileges revoked in some instances. A brief chapter on owling equipment is offered as is a chapter on building a backyard owling habitat.

In Part Two, the Suttons describe each species of owl occurring in North America. The descriptions give informa-

tion on range, diet, migration patterns and natural history. One thing I noticed is that the eastern species seem to get a more thorough treatment than do western species such as Western Screech Owl, Flammulated Owl and Whiskered Owl. This may be due to the authors living in New Jersey and not on the west coast.

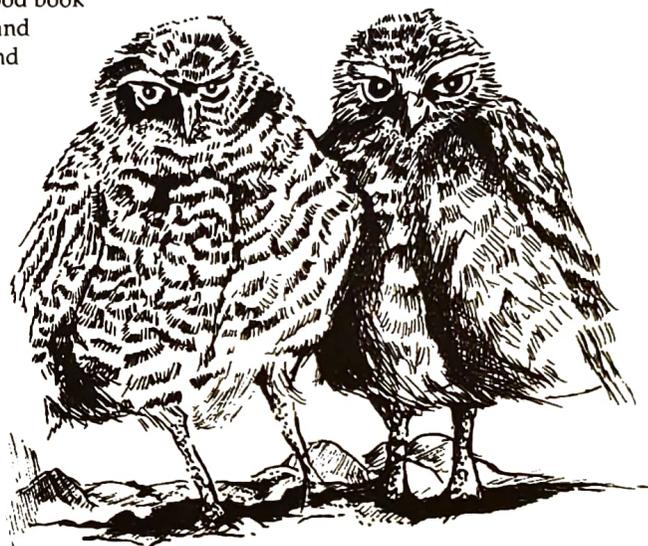
The last section lists references for owls and their natural history as well as address and phone numbers for various bird observatories and research stations that deal with birds of prey.

Overall this is a good book filled with useful and informative text and

many excellent photographs of owls. The photography alone is worth the \$15.00 price tag. *How to Spot and Owl* definitely deserves a place on any birders bookshelf.

Available from *The Wandering Tattler* (800) 231-9209. 144 pages, paper. \$14.95 plus shipping.

Paul Noble is a past president of the SFBBO Board of Directors, and authored an article on the distribution of owls at Monte Bello Open Space Preserve for *Western Birds* (21:11-16). Paul is teaching an upcoming course on owl identification for SFBBO.



SFBBO Updates

Bruce Babbitt visits the Bay

Late in 1995, SFBBO staff were invited by San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Manager Marge Kolar to attend Secretary Babbitt's visit to the Refuge. Along with the Secretary, a few other special guests and the press, we paddled a canoe down Newark Slough and attended his press conference at Refuge headquarters.

Wetlands Ecosystem Goals Project

We continue to attend meetings on this project to provide biological information to be used in the management and restoration of wetlands throughout the

bay area. Administered by the San Francisco Estuary Institute, the project includes experts in all aspects of wetland biology.

Western Sandpiper low-tide feeding study

SFBBO staff and volunteers recently spent a day observing foraging Western Sandpipers as part of a study organized by Dov Lank of Simon Fraser University in British Columbia. The same study was repeated at several points along the Pacific Flyway, with SFBBO providing data on San Francisco Bay's wintering population.

Colonial Waterbird Society Meeting

On November 9-12, 1995, staff biologist Valerie Layne attended the joint

conference of the Colonial Waterbird Society and the Pacific Seabird Group in Victoria, British Columbia (thanks to the generosity of Jean Takekawa and Jay Hanson). She attended workshops on cormorants and colonial waterbirds and networked with other researchers, including those interested in Black Skimmers.

Golden Gate's Great Blue Herons

Nancy DeStefanis, this past year's THINK BIG! award-winning volunteer, presented a program on the Great Blue Heron colony in Golden Gate Park, to the Golden Gate Audubon Society. She is the site coordinator for SFBBO's Colonial Waterbird Monitoring Program, for this colony which represents the only known nesting great blues in San Francisco.

Calendar of Member Events

April 14, Sunday, 8 - 11 am
South Bay shorebird census. Spring migration count.

And please reserve these dates:

August 24, Sunday, 8 - 11 am
South Bay shorebird census. Fall migration count.

September 14, Saturday
SFBBO's 15th ANNIVERSARY!!
Please plan to join us at our annual meeting and barbecue. Tentative guest speaker: Dave Shuford, of Point Reyes Bird Observatory and author of the Marin Breeding Bird Atlas.

Colonial Water Bird Monitoring Program

Spring is nearly with us, and so is the time to begin monitoring nesting colonies. Heron and egret surveys (in conjunction with Audubon Canyon Ranch Cypress Grove Preserve) will commence in March; gull, tern and Snowy Plover surveys will start in April. Contact Valerie at the office if you're interested in adopting a colony for the season.

SFBBO Wish List

Your used carpeting - large pieces of woven or low pile

A reliable used truck - either your own or a lead on one

Used binoculars and scopes - in alignment

Wishes do come true !

Special thanks to . . .

John Padley of San Mateo, for his generous donation of a handheld marine radio, for our safety while surveying the south bay sloughs in our Yukon.

Jessie Suckow Crowell and her mother, for donating and transporting some good used carpeting for use in our office.

Board member Robin Smith, for replanting our containers with beautiful flowering native plants.

Palo Alto Baylands Clapper Rail Survey

Eight volunteers gathered in the late morning hours at the Palo Alto Baylands on January 19 for the annual high tide rail census. This is SFBBO's contribution to the Clapper Rail Survey conducted by biologists from the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Owing to the poor performance of the tides (not as high as advertised) this year's count was fairly low. We recorded 20 Clapper Rails, 1 Black Rail and 1 Virginia Rail, as well as several Great Egrets, Black-crowned Night Herons, Great Blue Herons and a Peregrine Falcon observed by Janet Hanson while at brunch on top of a transmission tower (the falcon, not Janet). Thanks to the following volunteers:

Janis Buchanan, Robin Dakin, Sue Macias, Ann Moser, Robin Smith, Paul Stevens, Susan Stout and Alan Walther



California Clapper Rail.



Field observers Sue Macias and Janis Buchanan scanning for rails at the Palo Alto Baylands. Photo by Alan Walther.

Contributions

We thank the following individuals for their contributions to SFBBO (November 1995 through January 1996):

Leon Abrams, Virginia Becchine, D.J. Clarke, Howard Cogwell, Richard Croll, Kathleen and Derek Currall, Steve and Robin Dakin, Cliff Drowley, Ray Fontaine, Shirley Gordon, Daniel and Nancy Grove, Jay and Janet Hanson, Jan Hintermeister, Dorothy Hunt, Larry Kwong, Edwin Laak, Phil and Florence LaRiviere, David McIntyre, Barbara Monahan, Thomas Moore, Anne Moser, Marty Nelson, John Padley, Patricia Polentz, Jerry and Elsie Richey, Mary Simpson, Robin Smith, Alleen Thompson, George and Marilyn Trabert, Alan Walther, David Weintraub

Special Thanks

The SFBBO Board of Directors and staff wish to thank those who contributed to the 1995 year-end appeal. Due to your generosity, we are now in the process of upgrading our entire computer system, to run faster and with bigger memory.

In response to our wish list, John Padley donated a marine radio for use during our boat surveys and Valerie Layne donated volumes 15 and 44 of *The Condor*. Alan Walther donated a microwave oven, which we put in the classroom for those of you coming to one of our classes straight from work; he also donated a BEAUTIFUL print of the Black Skimmer featured on the cover of the last issue of *The Still*.

Memberships

We welcome the following new and returning members of SFBBO (November 1995 through January 1996):

Leon Abrams, Florance Abshire, Jean Alexander, Peter Allen, Janice Anderson, Robert Ball, Ronald Barklow and Viola Saima-Barklow, Joyce Bartlett, Carol Belew, Walter Berger, William Bousman, Robert Bowman, Richard Brannon, Mary Brezner, Juliette Bryson, Richard and Patricia Carlson, Ted Chandik, Doug and Gail Cheeseman, Rich Cimino, Bill and Jean Clark, Chris and Tom Clough, Howard Cogswell, Richard Croll, Steve and Robin Dakin, Brigitte deSaint-Phalle, Lorrie and Ron Emery, William Ferguson, Ray Fontaine, Harriet Gerson, Thomas Goodier, Shirley Gordon, Lorraine

Grassano, Leda Beth Gray, Thomas Grey, Theresa Grieve, Marie Grubbe, Madelon Halpern, B.P. Hand, Anne Harrington, Roger Harris, Kathryn Hickey, Jan Hintermieister, Alice Hoch, Barbara Houghton, Lance Hull, Amy Hutzel, Deborah Jamison, Edwin Laak, Phil and Florence LaRiviere, Peter LaTourette, Jessie Lawson, Valerie Layne, Robin Leong, Donald Lewis, William Lofthouse, Sue Macias, Peter Metropulos, Nora Monette, Anne Moser, Thomas Myers, Mary Nelson, Phil and Vi Nysonger, Donna Olsen, Doug Padley, Ed Pandolfino, Virginia Peterson, Patricia Polentz, Donald Reinberg, Emily Renzel, Laurel Rezeau, Bob Richmond, Jean Richmond, Dave Riensche, Robert Roadcap, Michael Rogers, Steve and

Heather Rottenborn, Susan Sandstrom, Jessie Schilling, Leslie Schuman, Martin Sidor, D. Peter Siminski, Mary Simpson, Sandra Skolnik, Robin Smith, Jean-Marie Spoelman, Kappy Sprenger, Don Starks, Helen Stevenson, Karlene and Terry Stoker, Susan Stout, Madeline Stovel, Emilie Strauss, Jesse Suckow Crowell and Chris Crowell, Jean Takekawa, Alleen Thompson, Hazel Tilden, Francis Toldi, George and Marilyn Trabert, Ruth Troetschler, Carolyn and Mike Uyemura, Tom and Marian VandenBosch, Alan and Sandra Walther, Mark Weinberger, David Weintraub, Estelle Weiss, Henry Weston, Virginia Whipple, Clark White, Perry Whittle, Kermit Wilson, Allan Wofchuck, Bernard Wone, Nick Yatsko, Penelope Young, Rebecca Young, Timothy Young, Lou and Jean Young.

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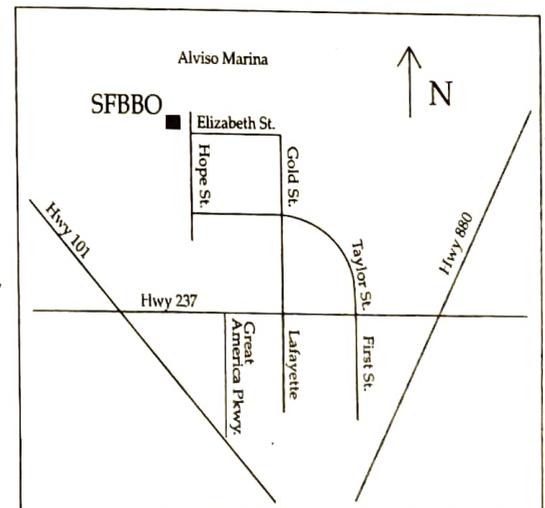
The Bird Observatory is located at 1290 Hope St. in Alviso. The office is open weekdays and some weekends, but specific hours vary with our field schedule. Before stopping in, call (408) 946-6548 and check when we will be available.

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

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The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory is a non-profit (501-C-3) corporation. All memberships and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Annual memberships are as follows:

Patron: \$2,000	Associate: \$50
Life: \$400	Family: \$35
Sustaining: \$200	Individual: \$25
Contributing: \$100	Student/Senior: \$15



SFBBO's educational program

Wetlands and waterbirds

Any of our friends driving by our Bayside Cannery building last fall probably wondered why they hadn't been invited to the party. With loads of cars parked out front and many small groups of people wandering around the building and neighboring land, it looked like an event worth attending. In actuality, the purpose was not socializing, but to introduce students from DeAnza College to the concepts and realities of the south bay's wetlands.

The class is offered as part of the Environmental Studies curriculum, developed by instructor Julie Phillips. With permission from the landowner, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Julie's classes were here as the first step toward a goal of restoring all or some portion of the seasonal wetland directly north of the cannery building. Students were introduced to the site and given an overview of the bay and its historic and current shoreline by SFBBO staff. Our short presentation served to introduce them to the different habitats and to the political realities of land management and restoration possibilities. After touring the site, the students were then assigned the task of developing their own ideas on how best to utilize it. During later visits, they measured the property and surveyed the plant and animal species already present, and learned the difference between permanent and seasonal wetlands. They also got a taste of the regulatory processes involved, through introduction to the various agencies, advocacy groups and research organizations focusing on the bay. Their finished plans for the area were required to include a map, but many of the more creative students also produced videos or constructed models.

This was only the first quarter of work by DeAnza students on this project. The future of the cannery building and adjacent wetlands are still unknown at this time, but Julie intends

to keep her students working toward an actual restoration of the site. Only time, our collective persistence and the regulatory processes involved will decide the eventual fate of the property.

1996 SFBBO Schedule of Classes

Are you and your friends interested in the spring and fall classes offered here at the Observatory? If so, please give us a call and we will gladly mail a class schedule.



Julie Phillips, DeAnza instructor, briefs her students on the goals of their wetland restoration project.

San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

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