

The Stilt

Vol. 18 No. 1

Spring 1999

The Newsletter of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

Salt Ponds and Birds

Most bay area residents recognize salt ponds from an occasional aerial view, on descent to a runway in San Francisco or Oakland. The jewel-tone mosaic of deep blue, green and orange-red water provokes a passing curiosity, soon forgotten during the rush at the arrival gate. But salt making in the Bay predates every other local industry, begun by Native Americans in shallow natural ponds near the bay's edge. Today we drive around and fly over the south bay's salt ponds, mostly not noticing them or the thousands of birds that make use of them.

SFBBO was begun by curious people like Richard Mewaldt and Mike Rigney, who not only noticed the birds on the salt ponds, but also began serious investigation into the seasonal use of the ponds by roosting and nesting waterbirds. SFBBO was then known as the South Bay Institute for Avian Studies and got started in a garage, like so many other Silicon Valley ventures. In the early 80's, Mike and Theresa Rigney began traveling the levees and surveying the ponds to produce a report for the Fish and Wildlife Service entitled "A breeding bird survey of the

south San Francisco Bay salt pond levee system, 1981." They surprised many people with news of hundreds of pairs of breeding terns, gulls, avocets and stilts that were utilizing isolated levees and islands in the ponds. This preliminary study spawned SFBBO's Colonial Waterbird Monitoring and Research Program, now entering its 18th year of field work and employing many trained volunteer observers in the four south bay counties. Some of this long-term data set has now been analyzed and prepared for publication, but much remains to be learned from it.

While this work was continuing, other curious SFBBO staff began research to understand use of the salt ponds by shorebirds. Even the casual observer can see that thousands of shorebirds pile into certain salt ponds when high tides cover the bay's mud flats. When drained, the mud floor of a salt pond is exposed, providing substrate for roosting and supplemental foraging by shorebirds. Again using volunteers, SFBBO documented shorebird use of salt ponds during high tides during late 1992 and into 1993, then again during 1996 and 1997. This information exists in a draft report; we are seeking funding to finalize it.



In this issue:

- 1 **Salt Ponds and Birds**
SFBBO's 18 years of monitoring and research
- 3 **New Faces at SFBBO**
A hearty welcome to new staff
- 4 **Woodpeckers & Christmas Counts**
Changing Bay area population
- 5 **The Future, SFBBO and CCRS**
Board discussions with Coyote Creek Riparian Station
- 5 **Annual Rail Reckoning**
SFBBO's 1999 Palo Alto Survey
- 5 **Annual Report 1998**
The financial year in review
- 6 **Spring Palette of Birding Activities**
Field trips, classes and volunteer training
- 8 **East Bay Field Trip Report**
Just the usual 97 species!



San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

P.O. Box 247 1290 Hope Street Alviso, CA 95002
phone 408 946-6548 fax 408 946-9279 SFBBO@aol.com

Continued on page 2

Salt Ponds and Birds

continued

Other species make extensive use of the ponds, among them American White Pelican, in addition to a long list of waterfowl species, such as Northern Shoveler and Gadwall, and the ardeids, e. g. Great Blue Heron. Some of these species breed on islands in the ponds and have been documented as part of the CWMRP. But there are huge holes in our understanding of some species' seasonal dependency on the ponds, such as Eared Grebe. And although we have tracked the colonies of Forster's Terns and other waterbirds through the years, we have much to learn about their foraging requirements, or indeed, how successful their reproductive efforts are.

The public is invited to learn more about salt ponds and other south bay habitats, and about our volunteer field opportunities at an orientation meeting on March 11, 7-9 PM, here at our Alviso Headquarters. Following that, more specialized training sessions include:

- Adopt a Colony: Waterbird Monitoring
Thursday, March 25, 7-9 PM
- Banding Bootcamp: Waterbird Research
Saturday, April 24, 10 AM – 3 PM
- Avian Disease Prevention Program
Tuesday, May 18, 7-9 PM

The only requirements are no fear of water or muddy conditions, a stout kayaking arm (in some cases), a strong sense of humor, adventure and commitment, and above all, a burning curiosity, the hallmark of SFBBO volunteers.

The Annual Rail Reckoning

by Robin Dakin

This year the annual high-tide rail count at Palo Alto Baylands on December 31 went off without a hitch. All the necessary gates to the PG&E boardwalks were unlocked on schedule so our volunteers, clothing intact, got to their observation vantage points without having to climb around barbed wire fencing. A 7.1 foot tide was predicted at the Golden Gate Bridge so we hoped the marsh would be fully inundated. The fine weather that day worked to our disadvantage how-

How Salt is Made in South San Francisco Bay

A working knowledge of the salt-making process is essential to understanding bird use of the ponds. Dr. Howard L. Cogswell, SFBBO Science Advisor, is a well-known (and well-loved) local authority on bayside birds and their habitats. The following description of the process has been modified from his report, written for the Wetlands Ecosystem Goals Project, 1996. This is the first in a series of salt pond information articles.

The term "salt pond" is traditionally used to cover any or all of the saltwater impoundments around the bay that are used in the various evaporation stages leading to final crystallization in the salt company plant sites (now only one company, Cargill Inc., Salt Division).

It is important to understand the basics of operation in those ponds still used in the salt-extraction process. Bay water is taken in either by pumping from a major slough or by gravity at a few "high-tide only" intake points. It is then moved along a sequence of up to 30 or more different impoundments, evaporating more and more (especially in summers) and being diluted each winter by rainfall, before finally reaching the crystallizers. That process takes from 3 to 7 years in the Cargill system and involves both gravity flows and pumping and passage through siphons under sloughs, railroads, highways, etc. at strategic locations. There is even some dependence on prevailing summer winds moving water between ponds that have narrow gaps in the dikes that otherwise separate them. The company calls most ponds "evaporators", because that is the only use they make of them. These are of graduated salinities because of their position in the particular sequence of ponds of which they are a

part. No one pond of significant size can be taken out of such a sequence (e.g. to convert it to some other land use) without serious effects on the whole operation. The final pond in the evaporator sequence from which water is distributed to the harvest areas is called a "pickle pond". It is normally filled in early fall with water nearly saturated with sodium chloride, which is then passed into the crystallizer ponds (usually rectangular and with specially smoothed and consolidated bottom) where the actual crystallization takes place and the salt is harvested. Liquid that remains above the crystals is called "bittern". It is pumped out to "bittern ponds" for storage (or some recycled back to be mixed with the next year's pickle pond input).

Leslie Salt Company (which was bought by Cargill in the late 1980s) assigned numbers to each evaporator in the sequence of the water movement at each of their separate plants: Newark (plants 1 & 2), Mowry (perhaps was a separate company), Alviso, Redwood City, and Baumberg (in west Hayward). In several areas additional ponds were added to the system at either the beginning or somewhere in the middle of the water—movement sequence, these ponds being distinguished by additional letters usually in suffix position. All these pond numbers continued in use by Leslie (and by Cargill) even though the Alviso plant was closed long ago, and the Baumberg and Redwood City plants in 1972 (the last one being reopened a few years later).

ever. Without the high-pressure system that accompanies a good rainstorm, the water didn't come up over the boardwalk this year. Despite that, the numbers were good this year, especially for Soras. We recorded 15 Clapper Rails, four Virginia Rails, 11 Soras and three Black Rails.

Many thanks for this years participants: Peg Bernucci, Kim Briones, Charles Coston, Grace Hattori, Danielle LeFer, Sue Macias, Anne Moser and Robin Smith.



SFBBO Updates

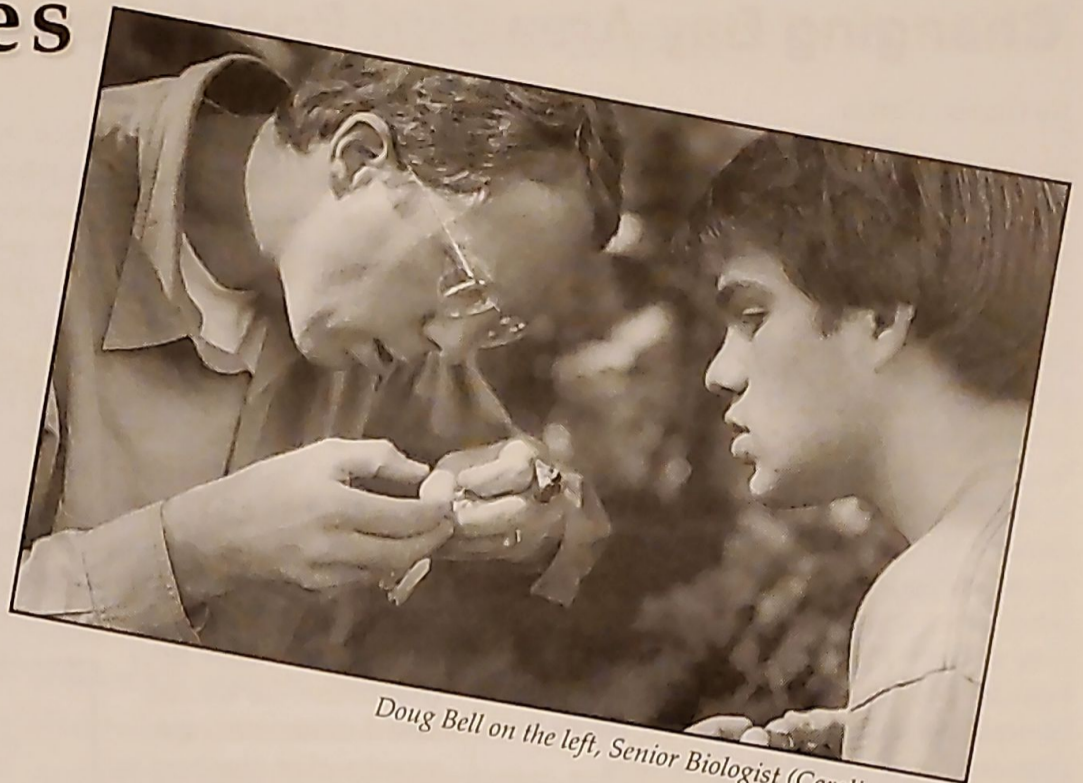
New Staff Faces

Introducing:

Douglas A. Bell, Ph.D Senior Biologist

Doug grew up in northern California/ Bay Area, maintaining a life-long interest in birds and natural history. He graduated from Humboldt State University in 1979 with a BA in Zoology, then went to Germany on a work-exchange program to live and work on a family-run farm. He wound up staying 5 years, earning a Master's degree in Biology at the University of Muenster in 1994 and then returned to California to undertake doctoral studies at UC Berkeley. His Ph.D. in Zoology, with an emphasis on systematic and evolutionary biology, was awarded in 1992. While at Cal, Doug received extensive training in museum science and procedures while working at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. His dissertation involved a multi-year study of hybridization between the Western Gull and Glaucous-winged Gull. (must be a connection here – from WEGUs and GWGUs to CAGUs!) With the help of many people, organizations, and agencies, he performed field work for this study in coastal Baja California, California, Oregon, Washington, British Columbia and Alaska. He will be receiving the Harry Painton Award for 1999 from the Cooper Ornithological Society for a paper published in the *Condor* (Vol. 98, pp. 527-546), entitled "Genetic differentiation, geographic variation and hybridization in gulls of the *Larus glaucescens-occidentalis* complex. To quote from his announcement letter: "The Harry Painton award is presented in alternate years by the Cooper Society for the four year period 1995-1998 to honor the best example of scientific research and writing in the *Condor*."

Since 1992, Doug has worked as a Post-doctoral Research Associate in the Department of Ornithology and Mammalogy at California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco. His work there has included:



Doug Bell on the left, Senior Biologist (Caroline Kopp)

- Evolution of song and vocal tradition in the White-crowned Sparrow, undertaken together with Dr. Luis F. Baptista (there must be another connection – Mewaldt/SFBBO and WCSPs).
- Use of molecular techniques to study the evolution of falcons in the Peregrine Falcon group (was awarded a Tilton Postdoctoral Fellowship in Systematics from the Academy in support of this work).

- Behavioral ecology of Peregrine Falcons in San Francisco Bay area.

From Doug: "I have had the good fortune to lead natural history trips and do field research in Europe, India, Taiwan, Africa, the Caribbean and South America, but I am most thrilled to have the opportunity to contribute to the future of San Francisco Bay and its environs by working with SFBBO. "

For our part, we are completely thrilled to have Doug on our staff.



Cheryl Millett, Executive Assistant (A. Threadgill)

Cheryl Millett Executive Assistant

If you have phoned the office recently, you probably have heard the voice of Cheryl Millett greeting you. She is officially known as the Executive Assistant (how did Janet do this all herself?!), and if you have any membership or field trip questions, she's the one to ask. Cheryl has been an enthusiastic volunteer at SFBBO since the beginning of last field season, and now she's hooked. She has done everything from monitoring the egret colony at Lake Merritt in Oakland, to banding California Gulls, to tramping outer Bair Island. We struck a deal wherein she gets dibs on field work in exchange for being an admin type, and that's a win-win for all of us. Cheryl is also working on her degree in biology at Cal State Hayward, so we have dibs on her when she isn't studying or sleeping. She's a gem and already indispensable.

Changing Bay Area Bird Populations II - Woodpeckers

By Charles Coston

The first article in this series (Stilt Vol 17, No. 2) dealt with the corvids. The series continues with resident local woodpeckers - Acorn, Nuttall's and Downy.

Over the last 24 years, Nuttall's and Downy Woodpeckers have switched predominance in my neighborhood in Sunnyvale (Acorn woodpeckers do not occur there - no oaks). Initially the local Downy Woodpecker was a frequent but inconspicuous visitor except in spring-time, when it used the backyard PG&E pole and the TV antenna as sounding boards. My first backyard record of Nuttall's Woodpecker is in 1981, when it appeared and shared the pole with Downy's for a couple of years. Thereafter Nuttall's became the dominant, conspicuous neighborhood woodpecker, and the Downy Woodpecker has nearly disappeared. However, Downys were back sharing the poles both last year and this, and lately they have been fairly frequent, though still inconspicuous, visitors in the neighborhood.

How typical is this sequence in the larger picture of bay area woodpecker population changes? Surprisingly, this pattern is similar throughout the bay area, based on Christmas count data for San Jose, Palo Alto, Crystal Springs and Oakland. The accompanying graphs show normalized abundance for these woodpeckers using the methods described in the first article of this series. The graphs illustrate a pronounced decline in Acorn Woodpeckers in three of the four count circles, Oakland being the exception with uniformly stable Downy woodpecker populations, and a strong rise in Nuttall's numbers everywhere except San Jose. In this context the invasion of Nuttall's in my Sunnyvale neighborhood could be expected. Furthermore, interesting things are happening with each species, and some possible underlying causes are worth considering.

I was surprised to find such a sharp decline in Acorn Woodpeckers. I had originally intended to use this species as a reference population from which to compare Downy and Nuttall's Woodpecker population trends. The status of these three woodpeckers was recently discussed on the South Bay Birds internet site SBB). The Acorn Woodpecker changes, as pointed out by Bill Bousman (SBB 6/30/98), are probably driven by loss of open oak habitat to development, aggravated

in otherwise suitable areas by trimming out all large dead limbs, whatever the tree, that Acorn woodpeckers need for nesting holes and for storing winter acorns. These woodpeckers are adaptable in acorn storage: Paul Stevens (SBB 6/30/98) described acorns in the sides of his wooden chimney, and Gloria LeBlanc (SBB, 7/5/98) discovered that homeowners near La Rinconada Park have resorted to metal roofing to thwart acorns in the eaves. There are now very few Acorn Woodpecker pockets on the Santa Clara Valley floor (Bill Bousman, loc cit).

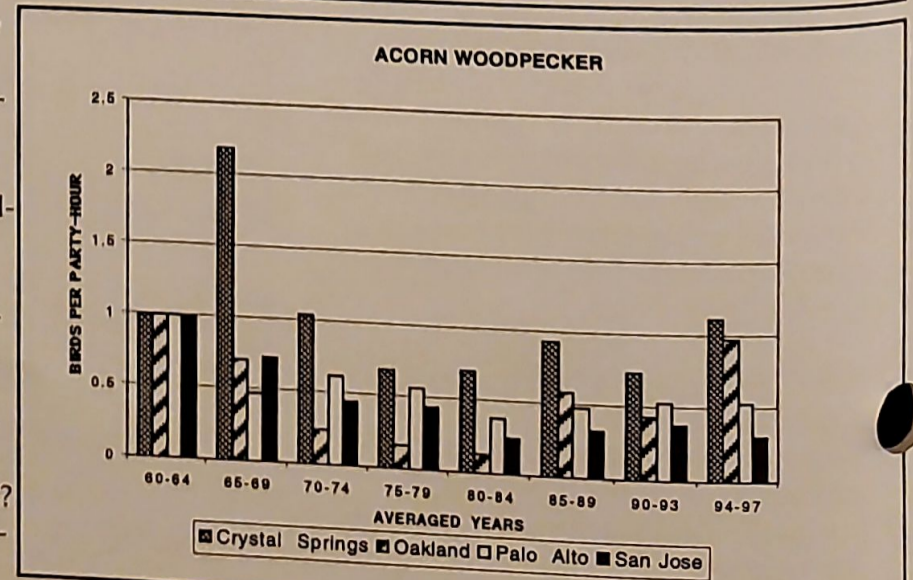
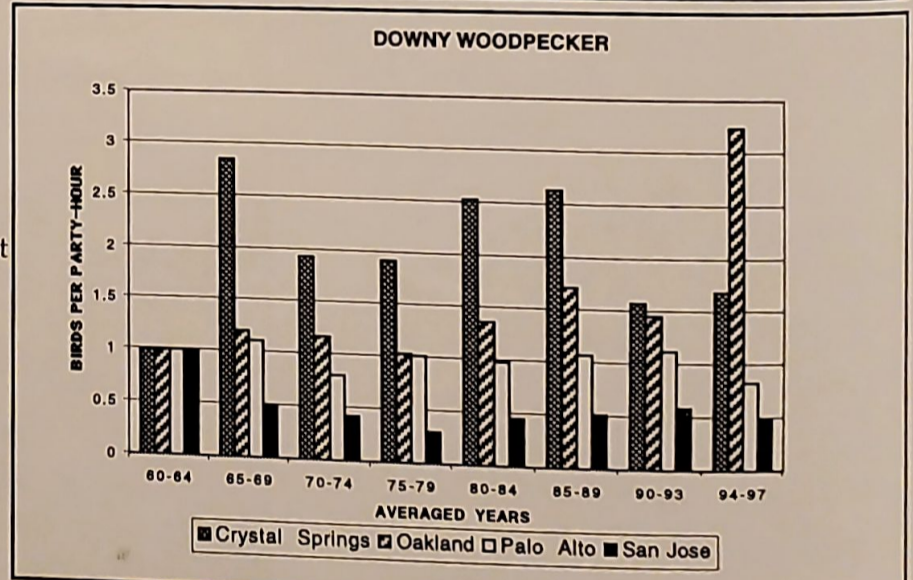
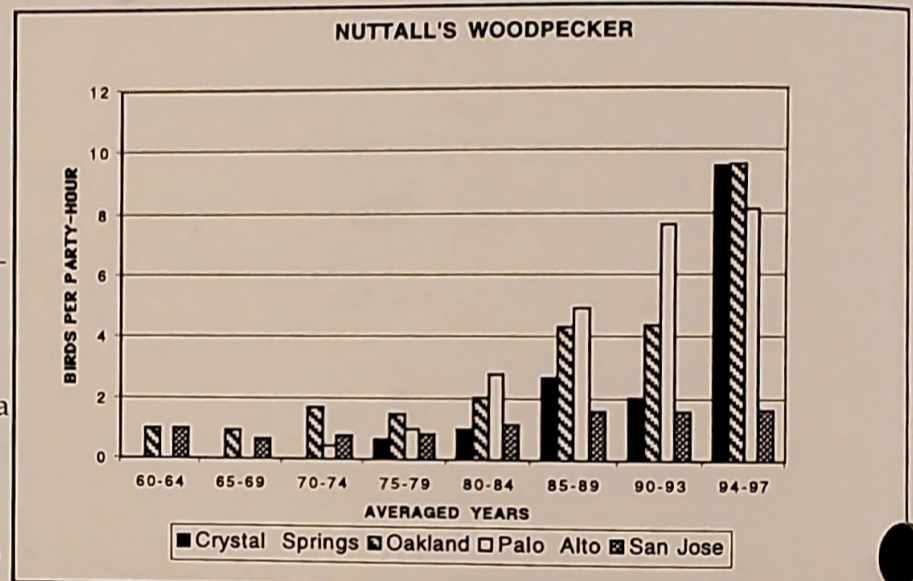
The decline in Acorn woodpecker numbers in the San Jose and Palo Alto counts is consistent with these observations. Apparently Acorn Woodpecker habitat in the Crystal Springs count circle has been less affected. The Oakland data are a puzzle. Dramatic declines in the 70's and early 80's fit the pattern, but a recovery in the 90's differs from continued declines at the other count circles. The Oakland count numbers also surge in the '90s for Nuttall's and Downy woodpeckers. Has the Oakland Christmas count effort in woodpecker habitat increased or are there really more woodpeckers there?

Maybe the planned 'control' species should have been the Downy Woodpecker. Bay area Christmas count numbers have remained fairly stable. This species is usually associated with riparian corridors, which are highly impacted by development. What has the Downy done to hold its own? Is it using new territory, or adapting to changes in old haunts? Have efforts to minimize and reverse riparian disturbance been significant? Why haven't Downys de-

clined as Nuttall's expanded? Very interesting questions.

The expansion in range and increase in populations of Nuttall's Woodpeckers is clearly real and dramatic. The population has been quite stable in San Jose, which supports Bill Bousman's observation (SBB loc cit) that they were well established on the south bay in 1960. Their absence from both the Palo Alto and Crystal Springs counts until the early 70's, coupled with a

Continued on page 5



corresponding population buildup in Oakland, suggests that Nuttall's Woodpecker is expanding northwestward up the bay from a stronghold in the south. The compelling question is why? Nuttall's Woodpecker can succeed in suburbia, with its variety of trees, by using man's imported trees. For several years, Dave Drake (SBB 6/30/98) has found Nuttall's nesting in city-planted maples (the older, dying trees) in Palo Alto. He also noted that Nuttall's is "definitely not bashful" at bird feeders, which may give them an edge in suburban settings. It's clear that something changed to allow their successful expansion. Was it: more mature trees? less pesticide use? more bird feeders? some change in Nuttall's behavior? all of the above?

Bay area woodpecker populations have responded differently to changes brought by development over the last 40 years. There are many opportunities for further study to clarify the underlying forces driving these responses. And yes, there are more Nuttall's Woodpeckers around.



1998 Financial Report

The size of the Bird Observatory's budget doubled in 1998, due to increased contract revenues and growth of our statewide fundraising event, the California Fall Challenge. Although our educational programs apparently lost money, they succeeded in non-monetary terms, such as improved intern management and new member participation. The latter is reflected in membership income, which increased by approximately 25% over 1997. The Endowment Fund is well and growing, thanks to John and Nena Padley, Robin W. Smith and past Life Members of the Observatory.

In 1999, our goal is to continue our efforts to diversify and increase our income stream, by:

- Offering a selection of classes, field trips and volunteer experiences that enhance our membership's birding experiences;
- Soliciting foundation and corporate support;
- Undertaking contractual work when it aligns with our mission;
- And by encouraging more participation and sponsorship of the Fall Challenge event.

Janet Tashjian Hanson
Executive Director

Income	
Research/Monitoring Programs	\$ 92,662.21
Educational Programs	\$ 1,336.00
Contributions	\$ 3,350.00
Fundraising	\$ 12,624.34
Membership	\$ 11,705.00
Miscellaneous	\$ 263.09
Total	\$121,940.64
Expenses	
Research/Monitoring Programs	\$ 82,021.15
Educational Programs	\$ 3,100.00
Fundraising	\$ 4,898.89
Member Services	\$ 3,037.68
Administrative overhead	\$ 29,890.85
Total	\$122,948.57
Endowment	\$ 7,021.67

The Future, *SFBBO* and *CCRS*

In late January, the Coyote Creek Riparian Station (CCRS) Board of Directors contacted the SFBBO Board of Directors. Talks have commenced regarding the future of both organizations.

A bit of background: CCRS was founded in the late 1980's as an offshoot of SFBBO. Initially, their work focused on birds of the riparian corridor, particularly the habitat

surrounding lower Coyote Creek. In later years, CCRS became deeply involved in volunteer creek monitoring projects, through the direction and expertise of Mike Rigney. The Station became justifiably well known for this program and literally wrote the book on how to organize and run citizen-based water quality monitoring projects. Until recently CCRS has continued to monitor bird populations in their creekside location.

Over the past few years, the staffs of CCRS and SFBBO have maintained a congenial working relationship. Many local birders have remained supportive of both organizations through their individual membership and fundraising efforts.



Calendar of Events

SFBBO offers a variety of ways to increase your knowledge and enjoyment of the Bay's birds and beyond through classes, field trips, bird walks and volunteer field work.

Field trips

Around the Bay . . .

Bird Walks

The south bay trails offer an excellent year-round variety of habitats and birds for the beginning birder. We offer noontime walks on the last Friday of every month. Call for information on location and meeting place. We also offer specialized tours for individuals or groups by prior arrangement.

Kayak Tour of Bair Island

Millions of shorebirds pause on the mudflats of the south bay to refuel on their way north. We will take a low tide tour of the sloughs surrounding Bair Island. No experience necessary. Limited group size.

Date: Sunday, April 18; May 2; 7 AM - 1 PM

Cost: Members \$60/Nonmembers \$75

Bair Island Wildlife Surveys

Accompany two SFBBO biologists on our monthly wildlife surveys of Bair Island. Search for the return of herons, egrets and terns to their former nesting grounds on the island. Observe harbor seals as they lounge in the cordgrass. These morning surveys will be conducted at high tide both on foot and in our 13' powered inflatable boat. Reserve your space soon as each trip is limited to only 4 participants.

Dates: Jan. 18, Feb. 16, Mar. 17, April 15, May 14, June 11, July 14, Aug. 11, Sept. 9

Cost: Members \$35/Nonmembers \$50

. . . . And Beyond

Honey Lake/Sage Grouse

Meet in Susanville, CA for a memorable search for high desert birds. Visit the Sage Grouse lek at dawn Saturday and then bird Honey Lake for large flocks of geese, ducks and raptors. Sunday AM provides a second chance at the lek if we're rained or snowed out. Then bird Sierra Valley for more waterfowl, cranes and raptors on the return. Fanatics can try for Black-backed Woodpeckers and Winter Finches.

Date: March 19-21

Leader: Dick Carlson

Cost: Members \$60/Nonmembers \$75

Wine, Wildflowers and Woodpeckers

In June, the Tahoe Sierras explode in a sudden profusion of wildflowers and bird-song. Dick Carlson has explored this area for the last decade. Join him at his Tahoe cabin, enjoy sweeping vistas of the lake, have a glass of wine and watch the Cassin's Finches, nuthatches and flying squirrels at the feeder. Explore for Black-backed and White-headed woodpeckers, Red-breasted and Williamson's sapsuckers, McGillivray's, Hermit and Nashville warblers that nest nearby.

Date: June 11-13

Leader: Dick Carlson

Cost: \$300 per couple, all meals and lodging included.



(Tom Ryan)

Classes

Sparrow Identification

Can you tell a Savannah Sparrow from a Song Sparrow – every time? These small, elusive and seemingly featureless “little brown jobs” can be a real challenge. This course will review the details of song and plumage of the 30 or so species of sparrow possible in the lower 48, with emphasis on our local specialities.

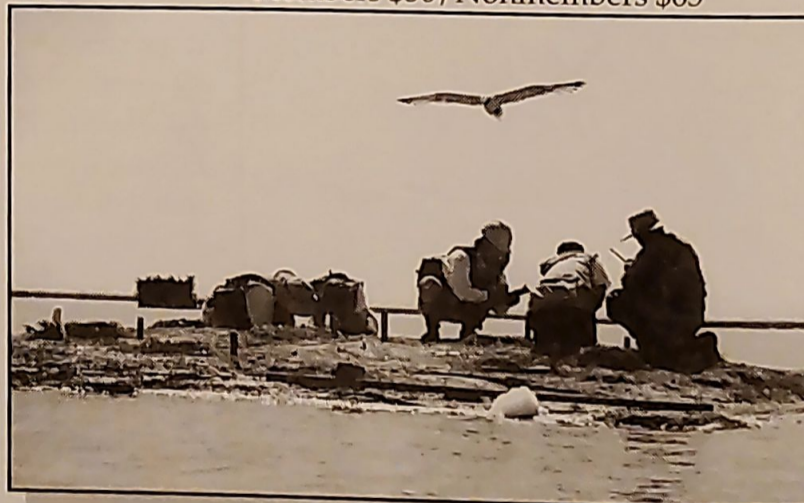
Class meeting: Thursday, April 22, 29 and May 6

7:00 - 9:15 PM

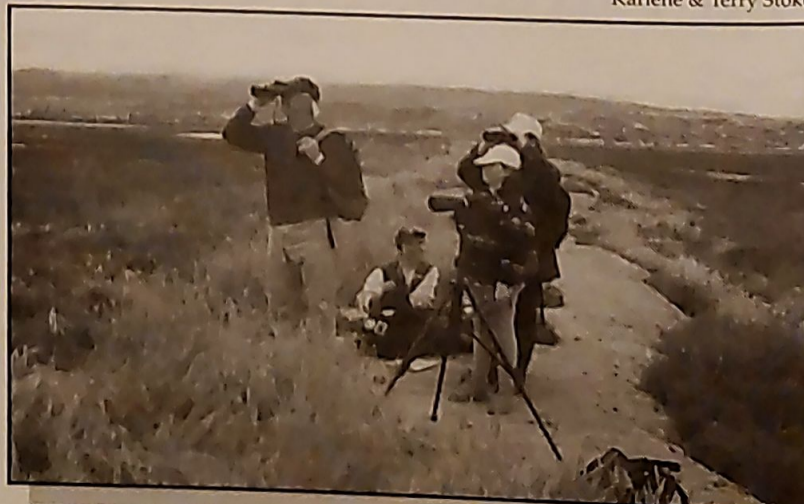
Field trips: Saturday, May 1 and 8; locations to be announced.

Leader: Don Starks

Cost: Members \$50/Nonmembers \$65



Karlene & Terry Stoker



(Tom Ryan)

Our thanks to these supporters of the Observatory....

Memberships

We welcome the following new and returning members of the SFBBO (November, December, January):

Ernie Abeles, Jean Alexander, Peter Allen, Emily Allen, Richard Anderson, John and Colleen Arnold, Morna Baird, Robert Ball, Ronald and Viola Barklow, Joyce Bartlett, Gordon Bennett, Peg Bernucci, Edith Black, June Bourne, William Bousman, Juliette Bryson, Eugenia and Peter Caldwell, Floyd Carley, Richard and Pat Carlson, Richard Casserley, Denise Catalano, Howard Cogswell, PhD, Rita Colwell, Irene Contreras, Kathleen & Derek Currall, Arthur & Helen Dawson, Adrian del Nevo, Ph.D., Cliff Drowley, Marcia and Steve Ellis, Lorrie & Ron Emery, Christine Eppstein, James Ernst, William Ferguson, Leslie Flint, Lillian Fujii, Christian Gellrich, Harriet Gerson, Thomas Goodier, Shirley Gordon, Nancy Greenfield, Madelon Halpern, Bernard Hand, Garth Harwood, Judy and Bill Hein, Carl Hendrickson, Jan Hintermeister, Richard Horrihan, M.D., Grant & Karen Hoyt, Kit Jones,

Peter LaTourrette, Jessie Lawson, Rosalie Lefkowitz, Robin Leong, Lee Lovelady, Barbara Margolis, Bonnie Marks, David McIntyre, Peter Metropulos, Anne Moser, Frances and Leroy Nelson, Bess Nericcio, George and Marti Oetzel, Kitty Pearson, Patricia Polentz, Peter Radcliff, Elsie Richey, Bob Richmond, Jim Richter, Joan Roach, Robert Roadcap, Michael Rogers, Leonard Rush, Steve Rutledge, Tom Ryan, Jan Ryan, Doni Saunders, Mary Schaefer, Jessie Schilling, Elaine Senf, Martin Sidor, D. Peter Siminski, Robin Smith, Jean-Marie Spoelman, Kappy Sprenger, Louisa Squires, Don Starks, John Sterling, Karlene & Terry Stoker, Jim Stopford, Madeleine Stovel, Emilie Strauss, Kathy Suter, Jean Takekawa, Alleen Thompson, Charles Thompson, Hazel Tilden, Sara Timby, Francis Toldi, Ruth & Gene Troetschler, Bill Walker, Daniel Watson, Kathleen Webb, David and Natalie Weber, Don Weden, Mark Weinberger, Gerry Weinberger, Henry Weston, Jr., Peter White, Anna Wilcox, Allan Wofchuck, Lou and Jean Young.

Contributions

Our special thanks to these Contributors to the Observatory (November, December, January):

Ginny Becchine, Peg Bernucci, Pete Bloom, Juliette Bryson, Eugenia and Peter Caldwell, Richard Casserley, Nicholas Coiro, Russ & Marilyn Fowler, Harriet Gerson, Shirley Gordon, Dolores Hansen, Grace Hattori, Jan Hintermeister, Delia Hitz, Sue Hunt, June Hymas, Robin Leong, Henry Miller, Anne Moser, John and Nena Padley, April & Mark Sapsford, Gregory Schrott, Robin Smith, Don Starks, Ruth & Gene Troetschler, Allan Wofchuck

Board of Directors

Richard Carlson, President
Palo Alto
Ed Pandolfino, Ph.D. Vice Pres.
Fremont
Anne Moser, Treasurer
Menlo Park
Robin Smith, Secretary
Atherton
Adrian del Nevo, Ph.D.
San Francisco
Harriet Gerson
Saratoga
Jan Hintermeister
Santa Clara
George Oetzel, Ph.D.
Menlo Park
Mike Spence
Woodside
Lou Young
San Jose

Staff

Janet Tashjian Hanson
Executive Director
Cheryl Millett
Executive Assistant

Douglas A. Bell, Ph.D.
Senior Biologist
Kim Briones
Biologist
Robin Dakin
Biologist
Danielle LeFer
Biologist
Brian Ryckewaert
Biologist
Jesse Suckow
Biologist

1998 Research Interns

Kiera Freeman
Howatt P. King

Research Associates

Janis Buchanan
Daniel Kluza
Sue Macias
Tom Ryan
Emilie Strauss
Peg Woodin

Newsletter Editor

Susie Formenti

Science Advisory Board

Shannon E. Bros, Ph.D. - San Jose State University
Howard L. Cogswell, Ph.D. - Professor Emeritus, California State Univ., Hayward
Charles Collins, Ph.D. - California State University, Long Beach
Adrian del Nevo, Ph.D. - Entrix, Walnut Creek
Leora Feeney - Biological Field Services
Elaine Harding - University of California, Santa Cruz
Paul Jones - Environmental Protection Agency
John Kelly - Audubon Canyon Ranch, Cypress Grove Preserve
Peter Metropulos - Subregional Editor, American Birds
Bob Richmond - Hayward Regional Shoreline
W. David Shuford - Point Reyes Bird Observatory
Nils Warnock, Ph.D. - Point Reyes Bird Observatory

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.

"The Stilt" is a quarterly publication of SFBBO. Printed by the Printing Spot on recycled paper. Copyright, 1996 San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory. All contributions should be sent to the Bird Observatory office, P.O. Box 247, Alviso, CA 95002.

SFBBO

Telephone: 408-946-6548
FAX: 408-946-9279
Email Address: sfbbo@aol.com
Website: www.sfbbo.org

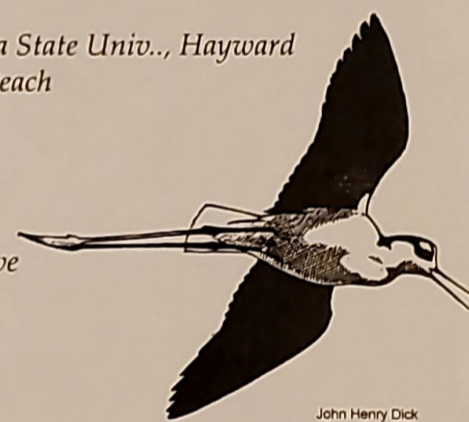
The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory is a non-profit (501-C-3) corporation. All memberships and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Annual memberships are as follows:

Patron: \$2,000
Life: \$400

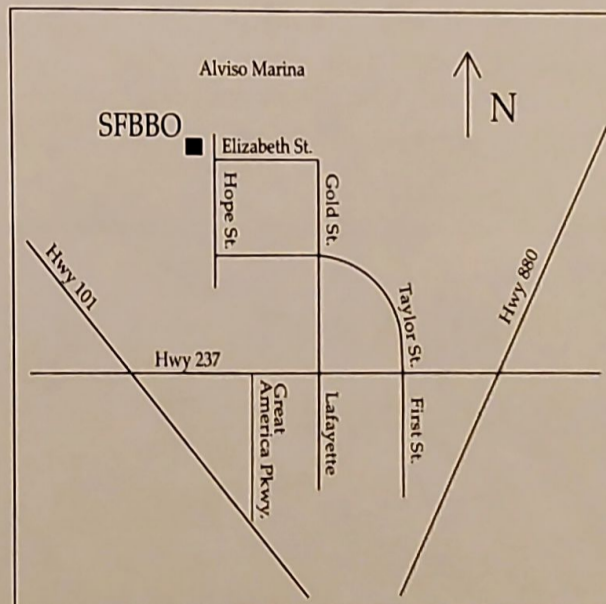
Sustaining: \$200
Contributing: \$100

Associate: \$50
Family: \$35

Individual: \$25
Student/Senior: \$15



John Henry Dick



East Bay Field Trip Report

by Ed Pandolfino

November 15th was an unseasonably mild day in the Bay Area, but most of the expected late fall birds showed up for the SFBBO East Bay day trip. Ron and Susan Holmes, Charles Coston, Steve Rutledge and myself found 97 species in two of Alameda County's best birding spots – Sunol Regional Park and Hayward Regional Shoreline.

I gave the group two start options. They could show up at Welch Creek Road near Sunol Regional Park for pre-dawn owling at 6AM, or sleep in a little and meet up in the park at 7:30. This was a pretty hard core group and everyone opted for the owling.

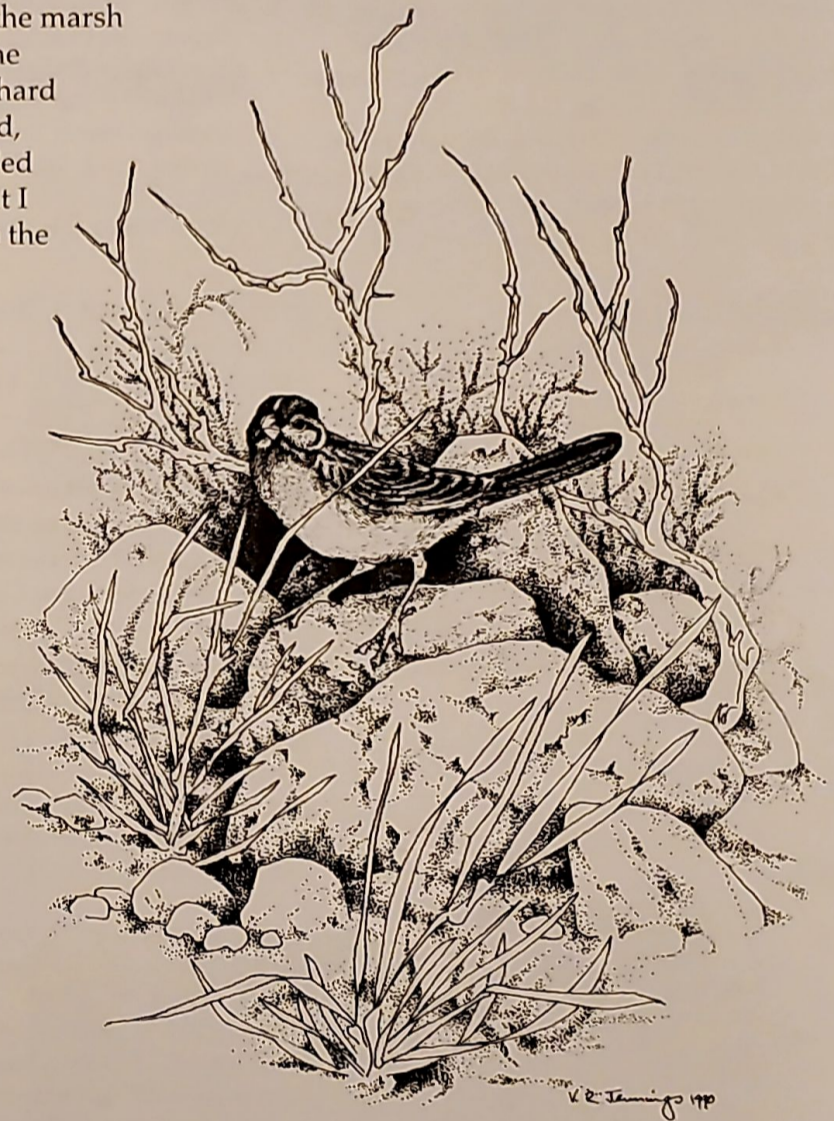
The owls did not disappoint us. At our first stop we were surrounded by at least four Great Horned Owls and three Western Screech-Owls, all of them calling repeatedly. Near the park headquarters we found most of the park's specialties like Yellow-billed Magpie, Western Bluebird, Acorn Woodpecker and a large flock of Wild Turkey. We also got great close up looks at a Red-breasted Sapsucker. Townsend's Warbler were present in unusually large numbers, nearly outnumbering the Yellow-rumped Warblers!

Near Little Yosemite, we saw two Golden Eagles soaring overhead, heard a Cooper's Hawk calling loudly up the canyon and watched two Sharp-shinned Hawks cruising just over the oaks. Just past Little Yosemite, we found a Canyon Wren foraging in the rock outcrops. Along the road back to the parking area, there were Rufous-

crowned Sparrows calling but we managed only one very brief look.

After a pleasant lunch in the picnic area near the Sunol Park headquarters, we headed to Hayward Regional Shoreline. The Shoreline yielded all the expected ducks and shorebirds plus a few bonus species like Eurasian Wigeon and Red Knot. We got a couple of quick glimpses of a Virginia Rail wandering in and out of the cattails. A couple of Northern Harriers were working the marsh continuously, keeping the birds edge. I tried very hard to turn a distant, perched, badly back-lit White-tailed Kite into a peregrine, but I got no cooperation from the group.

Although we didn't see many rarities, it was a good day to enjoy the diversity present in just two of the east bay's many fine parks and refuges.



SFBBO

San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

P.O. Box 247 1290 Hope Street Alviso, CA 95002
phone 408 946-6548 fax 408 946-9279 SFBBO@aol.com

Non Profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
ALVISO, CA.
PERMIT #9