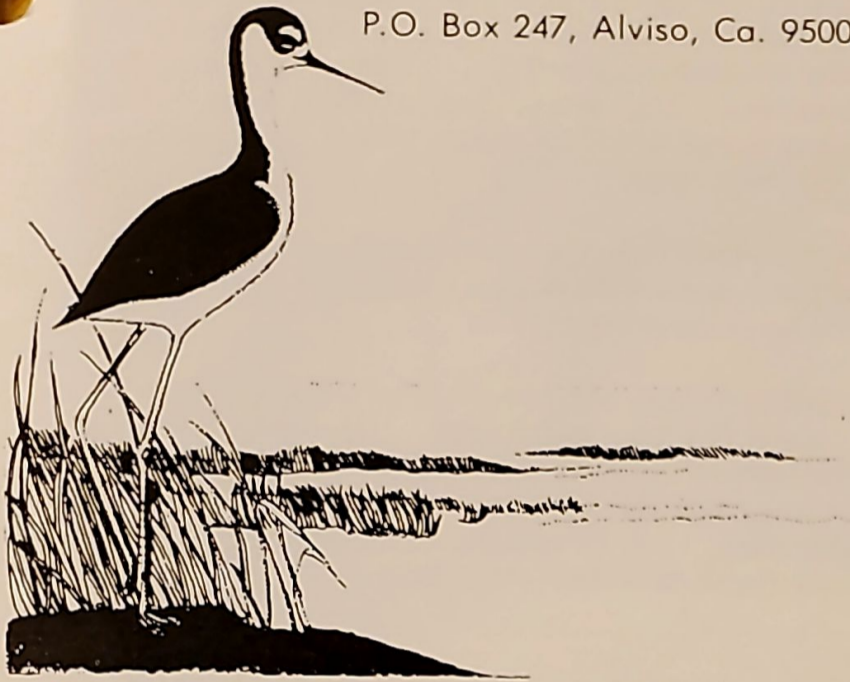


SAN FRANCISCO BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY NEWSLETTER

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SFBBO ADVISORY BOARD EXPANDED

By comparison to some bird observatories which operate across the North American continent, SFBBO is still in its infancy. We are growing however, and that growth is accompanied by a more broadly complex range of activities. This means that we need advice and counsel from people who are highly knowledgeable in a variety of disciplines. To meet this need, we are very pleased to welcome seven talented new people to the SFBBO Advisory Board. To introduce you to our new advisors, let us tell you, very briefly, about them.

Richard A. Coleman - Before taking the job as Refuge Manager of the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge complex, a position he assumed in 1986, Rick did undergraduate and M.S. studies at Michigan State, followed by a Ph.D. from Penn State University. Noted for his knowledge of shorebirds, he has worked in Everglades National Park, Hawaii and Pacific Islands National Wildlife Refuge complex, where he was assistant refuge manager, and as a research coordinator in the U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C.

Charles T. Collins - Ornithologists who are interested in swifts, terns, owls, and endangered species need no introduction to Dr. Collins. A Professor of Biology at California State University, Long Beach, he has authored more than seventy professional papers dealing with avian biology and ecology and is a member of Endangered Species Recovery Teams for California Least Terns and Light Footed Clapper Rails. His educational background includes undergraduate degrees from Amherst College and the University of Michigan followed by a Ph.D. from the University of Florida.

William M. Draper - Bill received a B.S. in Biochemistry followed by M.S. and Ph.D. in Agricultural Chemistry from the University of California at Davis. He has served as a Research Assistant Professor at Utah State, done post-doctoral work in

the pesticide laboratory at the University of California at Berkeley, then worked as an Assistant Professor at the University of Minnesota. He now works in Berkeley as an environmental chemist, on which matters he will advise us along with fielding questions we have about problems of toxicology.

Tim Krantz - Although his initial studies at Redlands University were in ethnobotany, Tim has branched out considerably since then. He is a specialist in environmental assessment and planning, presently serving as a Planning Commissioner for San Bernardino County and an environmental consultant in Costa Mesa. Additionally, Tim successfully lead a campaign to establish a preserve for endangered plants in the Big Bear region of the San Bernardino Mountains, has managed that preserve for the Nature Conservancy, and established a Bald Eagle nesting program in the southern California region.

Martha Lennihan - After graduation from Colorado College, Martha worked as a biologist for the Colorado Division of Wildlife, then as an analyst for the California Coastal Commission. She then served a stint as a biologist for the California Department of Fish and Game before obtaining her law degree from the University of California at Davis. Presently, she is an attorney for the firm of Downey, Brand, Seymour and Rohwer where she specializes in natural resources law especially as it pertains to water and public lands issues.

Steven Sims - With degrees from the University of California at Davis including a Ph.D. in Entomology, Steve has been a Lecturer in Entomology at U.C. Davis, Research Associate at Notre Dame University, Research Associate at North Carolina State University, and a Research Specialist at the University of Florida. He is, at present, a Senior Research Entomologist for Monsanto Chemicals. Steve's advisory specialties for SFBBO include entomology, systematics, ecology, physiology, host-plant relations, and photography.

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Advisory Board Continued from page 1

Paul Thayer - Paul might prefer to be known as a working farmer, but his knowledge extends far beyond the boundaries of his farm. A graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, Paul has served in the U.S. Navy, been a technical assistant in the San Francisco Public Library, then was a staff analyst and legislative liaison for the California Coastal Commission. He now is Consultant to the State of California Assembly Natural Resources Commission, specializing in coastal issues and problems involving public trust situations.

Although we lament the passing of the late Don Bleitz and the loss of Roger Johnson from our Advisory Board due to his transfer to Crater Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon, the addition of these seven people will greatly benefit SFBBO as it continues to grow. ■

ONE WAY TO FIGHT THE ELEMENTS

Do you remember the last time you stood shivering in the wind, binoculars in hand, trying to focus on that once in a life-time bird? Now, SFBBO can help you prevent this from happening again. As an Observatory fundraiser we are purchasing windbreakers for SFBBO members. You can get a windbreaker and help the organization at the same time.

Water repellent and washable, both styles include a Byron collar, slash pockets on the sides, knit cuffs, and a drawstring waist. These windbreakers are available in adult sizes small, medium, large, extra large, and extra extra large (based on men's shirt sizes) and in youth sizes small (6-8), medium (10-12) and large (14-16).

We will pool this windbreaker order to get a quantity discount and the proceeds will go to the SFBBO general account. So, make this windbreaker a vital part of your outdoor wear by sending a check for \$25, payable to SFBBO, by June 1, 1987.

P.S. For those of you who have inquired about good quality rubber boots, bear with us. We hope to have a source of good ones at reasonable prices by next month.

JACKETS!

**CAPRICORN'S
OXFORD NYLON
WINDBREAKER IS SPECIAL**
YOU JUST WON'T FIND BETTER FOR LESS.

This new coaches-weight Caprolan® nylon windbreaker features quality workmanship and classic styling . . . and it was designed with imprinting in mind. The fabric's special water repellent coating won't interfere with screen printing inks. Large, unobstructed areas allow clean, efficient printing. Best of all, the low price means more profit. Available in lined or unlined styles.



- Perma-shape Byron collar
- Pre-shrunk Kasha flannel lining. Will not shrink & pull jacket out of shape when washed. Precisely cut & fitted to each jacket.
- 200 Denier, oxford weave coaches weight nylon
- Double stitched slash pockets just the right angle for warming hands.
- Snap front. Snaps come with famous antique nickel finish.
- Set in sleeves for square shouldered look & larger imprinting area.
- 100% Caprolan® nylon. Water repellent.
- Soft, warm color matched knit cuffs. They won't snag, bind or lose their shape.

RAPTOR STUDY

Hello. This letter is to introduce myself and notify your group of a study involving birds of prey breeding, wintering and migrating through the hilly area of southern Alameda county. The study includes most of the area east of Mission Peak to Cedar Mountain ridge and those areas south of route 84 to the county line. This extensive area offers many habitats for nesting raptors which we will be specifically interested in this spring and summer.

I have already negotiated access to East Bay Regional Park and San Francisco Water Dept. lands, and plan to make these areas the center of the study.

I would appreciate being informed by anyone discovering new or historic nest sites in this area. This would certainly be an advantageous input to this census and I assure you all information will be held confidential. Your effort is much appreciated. I can be reached at Sunol Regional Park, P.O. Box 82, Sunol, Ca. 94586 (415) 862-2244.

Joseph E. DiDonato

CLASSES AND TRIPS

Fremont Adult School is offering an all-day Nesting Birds Field Trip on Saturday, May 16th from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Must preregister by May 12th with the Fremont Adult School at 791-5841. The fee for this class is \$14.50. Leader Alice Hoch.

Nature Explorations - Tuleyome is offering a 2-day birding extravaganza to Pt. Reyes National Seashore on May 16th and 17th. Fee \$35/adults, \$25/children, \$95/family (Includes overnight at Pt. Reyes Hostel). Leader David Wimpfheimer. For more information call (415) 324-8737.

The **Nature Sounds Society** is sponsoring its Third Annual Field Recording Workshop on June 18th thru 21st at the San Francisco State University Field Campus at Yuba Pass. Greg Budney, Assistant Curator, Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology Library of Natural Sounds, will be a special guest. He and other experts will present talks about field recording, discuss equipment, give workshops, aid in bird sound identification, and demonstrate techniques on field trips in the rich Sierra Nevada Mountains. Cost is \$100 or register by May 4th at \$90. For more information contact Paul Matzner or Bob Love at the Oakland Museum (415) 273-3884.

The **History and Natural Sciences Guilds** is sponsoring a slide-illustrated lecture on the works of painter-naturalist Andrew Jackson Grayson. Andrew Hoyem, director of the prestigious fine printing firm Arion Press, publisher of *Birds of the Pacific Slope* will discuss Grayson and his paintings, which will be on view in the Great Hall April 25 through June 14. He will also describe his project of reproducing Grayson's work in the new limited edition portfolio, as well as discuss the process of fine printing, quality control in producing limited editions, other works he has published and more. Tickets may be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope with a check for \$5 (\$4 for OMA members or Friends of the Bancroft Library) to: Hoyem Lecture, The Oakland Museum, 1000 Oak Street, Oakland, CA 94607.

MAMMAL OF THE MONTH

California vole (meadow mouse)

Microtus californicus

by Vicki R. Jennings



Although mammals are not conspicuous part of the salt and freshwater marsh environments, they are nevertheless an important part. As a food source for many marsh-dwelling birds, including northern harriers, black-crowned night herons, egrets, and clapper rails, small mammals are a significant part of the food web. As manipulators of vegetation (by runway-building rodents) and soil (by muskrats and ground squirrels working the levees), mammals play a small but noticeable role in the maintenance and/or destruction of wetlands features. Finally, the presence or absence on contested wetlands of the endangered salt marsh harvest mouse, San Francisco Bay's most famous small mammal, has wide-ranging political and legal implications.

For more than six years I have live-trapped small mammals all around the South Bay while working on research or consulting projects. I've been impressed by the numbers of small mammals present in many areas, and by their ability to persist in what appears to be very marginal habitat. Yet very few people, no matter how keen observers they may be of the more obvious avian inhabitants of the marshes, ever see or appreciate these hidden and largely nocturnal critters.

It's fitting to begin a survey of Bay mammals with the California vole or meadow mouse (*Microtus californicus*). One of the most widespread and numerous small mammals in California, *Microtus* is found in nearly every open,

lowland habitat present. As long as sufficient cover is available, *Microtus* populations will take advantage of it. Salt marshes are no exception; even narrow strips of vegetation on levee sides have sizeable numbers of this little rodent.

About seven inches long at maturity, *Microtus* has a gray-brown, often grizzled coat with the belly fur somewhat lighter. The tail is less than one-third of the total body length, and the ears are small and often hidden by fur. The overall appearance of *Microtus* is a blunt-nosed, pudgy, "bearish" rodent.

The meadow mouse is a prolific and fast-lived creature, with young being born throughout the year after a gestation period of three weeks. The young are weaned and on their own after just two weeks, with females able to become pregnant at three weeks of age. As females may have up to nine young per litter, and have several litters per year, the reproductive potential of this animal is impressive. Fortunately, *Microtus* is a favorite (or at least readily utilized) item on nearly every predator's menu.

Microtus lives within the dense mats of vegetation [particularly alkali heath (*Frankenia grandifolia*), salt grass (*Distichlis spicata*), saltbush (*Atriplex semibaccata*) and fathen (*A. patula*)] found along many levees, constructing neat and well-worn tunnels that are used when the rodents forage. It's difficult to imagine the amount of "working" that goes on under those seemingly solid canopies;

next time you are walking on San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge levees, stop and lift one of the mats--there's a rodent city in each one. *Microtus* feeds on succulent vegetation, and clippings may often be found along the runways.

Past researchers on this rodent agree that *Microtus* shows great fidelity to small home ranges, with an average maximum of sixty feet between capture sites. Our trapping at Triangle Marsh, Mud Slough and Coyote Creek found that individuals moved an average of only 21 feet between captures, with many mice recaptured at exactly the same spot as on first capture. (One balding but feisty female, Mata Hari by name, was recaptured six times in the same trap, her determined incisors leaving us with shredded knuckles each time.) Obviously, long-distance travel among *Microtus* troops is uncommon.

Excellent swimmers; voles may paddle as far as twenty feet underwater. This ability is of great value, of course, when high tides force them to abandon their sheltered runways and the shadows of their predators darken the water. No matter how many may be taken, enough *Microtus* survive to help sustain the next generation of harriers or owls or herons or, hopefully, rails. The ubiquitous, prolific vole, as dull as it may appear, is thus at least partly responsible for the beauty we have in the air--a good thing to remember! ■

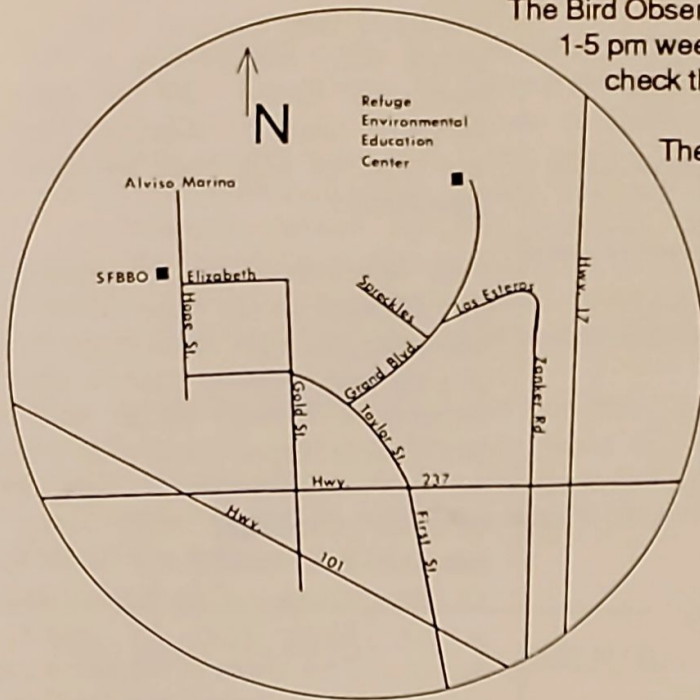
SFBBO IS HEATING UP - YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

When you visit the observatory office, some cold day hence forth, you will notice a behavior change on the part of the people who work there. Instead of wearing five layers of clothing and huddling close to the kerosene stove, people working in the office will be walking around like normal folks instead of imminent victims of hypothermia. Two activities are responsible for this condition.

Our landlord, the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, purchased insulation and plywood siding material and also paid for the rental cost of a hydraulic scissors lift. This allowed SFBBO volunteers to insulate the north wall of the

Continued on page 4

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.

HEATER *Continued from page 3*

office section of the building as well as to structurally strengthen that wall.

The second warmth-producing factor is the result of a decision by the SFBBO Board of Directors to accept a bid from D. A. Richards Refrigeration, Milpitas, to install gas fired space heaters in the office and laboratory. By the time you read this, Mr. Richards will have installed a 75,000 BTU space heater in the upstairs office and a second unit, of 30,000 BTU productivity, in the downstairs laboratory.

There is a catch to this however. These two units cost \$2,400.24, with the "up front" money having been provided by an anonymous member in the form of a loan. To pay off this loan we are asking you to contribute whatever you can afford to help repay. **Please send your contribution SFBBO - mark your check "heating fund" or enclose a note indicating that you intend the money for that purpose.**

Donations

The Bird Observatory greatly appreciates the following donations:

Jean and Pat Dubois for their donation of a one year subscription to the *Journal of Wildlife Management*.

Peg Woodin for her donation of a one year membership to the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

April Sapsford for her donation of wild bird seed.

Barbara Cox, Fran Mewaldt and Hazel Tilden for the refreshments for the April General Meeting.

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Thursday, May 7, 1987

Refuge Environmental Education Center
in Alviso

7:30 pm

FEATURED SPEAKER: Marlene Testaguzza, an active supporter and volunteer at Henry Coe State Park.

TOPIC: This program titled "The Four Seasons of Coe Park", will feature one of the natural treasures of the Santa Clara Valley - Henry Coe State Park. Marlene will provide rare views of an outstanding nearby natural resource.

Editor, Susie Formenti



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

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.