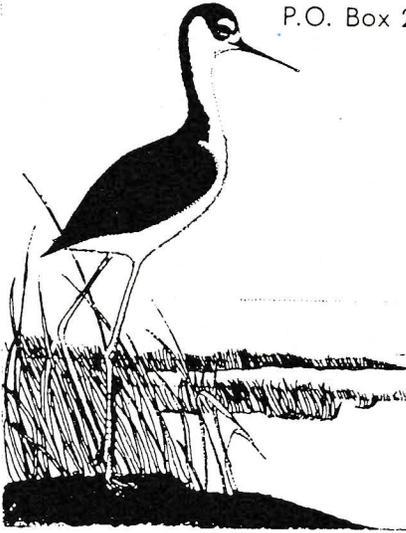


SAN FRANCISCO BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY NEWSLETTER

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

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Alviso, Ca.
Permit #9



Volume 9, Number 2

March/April 1990

CLASSROOM READY

After two months of work, our new classroom has been completed. Formerly the Bird Observatory's old office, the room had been neglected and used only rarely as a lab. With our expanded offerings of bird identification classes we needed a larger room than the office upstairs provided. New drywall was hung, new doors and framing installed and the entire room was painted. Soon the concrete floor will get a new coat of paint. Classroom furniture donated by Peter Moseley has been set up and our first classes in the room have already started. A great deal of work has been put into this renovation. The Bird Observatory thanks those volunteers who helped us on this project: Derek Currall, Darrell Gray, Paul Noble, Don Starks, Peg Woodin and Lou Young. ■

DONATIONS

SFBBO sincerely thanks David & Roberta Seals for their donation of an IBM Selectric Typewriter.

Thanks to the anonymous donor of the book titled, "The Birds of South America", by Robert S. Ridgely and Guy Tudor

SFBBO CLASSES AND TOURS

Listed below are classes and tours offered by the Observatory. If you are interested in attending any of these classes or tours, call Don Starks at the Bird Observatory office.

THE KNAPP STUDY

Survey trips for the Knapp Study are continuing every other weekend starting at 9:00 a.m. Listed below are dates scheduled through the month of May 1990. 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 25
Saturday	March 10
Sunday	March 25
Saturday	April 7
Sunday	April 22
Saturday	May 5
Sunday	May 20

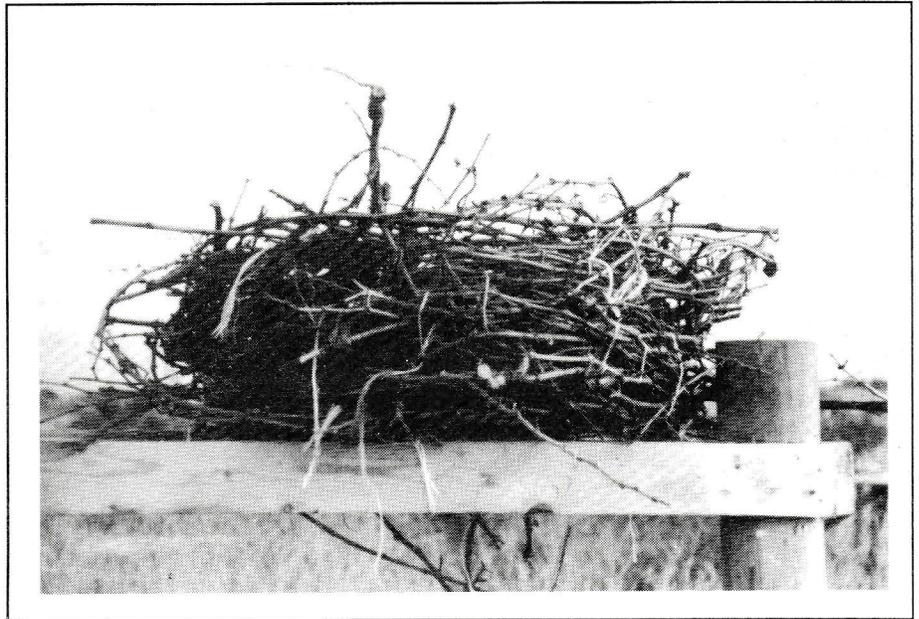
<u>Class</u>	<u>Instructor</u>	<u>Date</u>
Owl Biology	Paul Noble	March
Sparrow Identification	Don Starks & Paul Noble	May
Taxidermic Technique	Dave Martin	July
Shorebird Identification	Don Starks & Paul Noble	August
Duck Identification	Paul Noble	Nov.
<u>Tour</u>	<u>Leader</u>	<u>Date</u>
Joshua Tree New Mexico	Paul Noble Don Starks	Feb. 17-19
Spring in Arizona	Paul Noble Don Starks	May 12-20
Southeast Arizona	Paul Noble Don Starks	August 4-12

Presidents Perusals

by Paul L. Noble

Often times when you are involved in an endeavor that, at the time may seem unpleasant or miserable, that misery is forgotten once the endeavor is completed. I tell you this, because a recent trip to Bair Island by volunteers of the Bird Observatory brings this to mind.

Our success with artificial nesting platforms for Great Blue Herons on Bair Island in 1989 prompted the Observatory to continue this management technique this year. This past January we loaded up the Avon and Zodiac boats with our artificial nests and wooden nest platforms and headed out from Redwood Harbor towards Bair Island. About this time a rain squall moved in and began kicking up water as we ploughed into the waves through the rain. The swells grew as we entered the open bay heading for our beach-head on the northeast side of the island. Waves washed over the bow of our boats and threatened to dump our load of nests into the bay. We did, however, make our beach-head and began to unload. The nesting colony was another few hundred yards ahead along the beach, so we decided to keep our trailing Zodiac loaded with nests and pull it to the colony. Through the breaking waves we tugged and struggled with the fully laden craft. Often we would come to a small slough leading in toward the island and wade or jump over it still keeping a grip on the lead line. So soaked were we that slipping and falling



Artificial heron nest constructed with grape vines by Jose Castillo. (Photo by Paul Noble)

into the surf made no matter. Finally we made it to our landing point, and after a last overland journey with our platforms and nests, we had time for a brief rest. We only had a couple of hours left to place the artificial nests in the colony and do a cursory survey of existing nests before the tide receded. Soon Peg Woodin, our project leader, called for us to head out as the tide was falling. A few quick photos to document our efforts and it was back to our Zodiac. Though now empty and easier to pull, the tide had receded enough that we often had to pull

the boat over small peninsulas of mud exposed by the ebbing tide. The Avon was still tied up where we left it and soon we were headed back towards Redwood Harbor thoroughly exhausted, but somehow feeling pretty good. After all how often can one experience the beauty and serenity of an isolated island just offshore of over a million people? As we headed back to the launch ramp we past rafts of Surf Scoters and Greater Scaup, often flushing them up just in front of our boat. We even saw a Harbor Seal watching our progress.

If you have volunteered for the Bird Observatory in the past you may have gone out with us to Bair Island or to the California Gull colony or counting shorebirds on the Knapp Tract. If you haven't, but would like to visit these and other places where we conduct research, come on out and join us. You may sometimes ask yourself just why you are doing this, but eventually you'll find you can't get enough.

I'd really like to thank those volunteers who helped with this project on Bair Island: Ginny Becchine, Jose Castillo, Tom Esperson, Susie Formenti, Debra Kleffman, Glen Rogers, Melissa Sheehan and Peg Woodin. Without their help and patience none of our efforts would have been possible. ■



Volunteers Glen Rogers, Peg Woodin and Debra Kleffman pull boat full of artificial nests to heron colony. (Photo by Paul Noble)

PROJECT REVIEW - 1990

COLONIAL BIRDS Surveys conducted bimonthly, April thru August.

The Bird Observatory will be expanding these surveys to include North Bay colonies as well as outlying Great Blue Heron colonies in Alameda and Santa Clara Counties. All colonial nesting species such as Egrets, Herons, Terns, Gulls, Cormorants and Swallows will be censused. Data gathered from this project is a very important source of information for both the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Fish and Game to understand bird movements, population trends and nesting success within the Bay Area, especially in potentially disturbed areas. Volunteers are always needed for this wide ranging project.

CALIFORNIA GULLS Surveys conducted May thru August

This year banding will resume after a year's hiatus at the Alviso colony. Birds within our new impoundment as well as on the main road leading to the colony will be banded with both color combination bands and stainless steel bands bearing Fish and Wildlife Service numbers. Fledgling success will again be monitored within the impoundment as well. We may again assist other investigators in comparing egg energetics. Color marking of adults and fledged young may be initiated to investigate dispersal of the gulls from this colony. 1990 marks the 10th year of this colony and it has continued to expand since its discovery. Volunteers are needed to census and band. (Banding will be conducted at night to minimize colony disturbance.)

BOTULISM MONITORING Surveys will be conducted once a week from June through November

Avian Botulism is a disease caused by a bacteria (*Clostridium botulinum*) commonly known as food poisoning. *Clostridium botulinum* type C is found naturally occurring in soils, however, suitable environmental conditions are necessary for bacterial reproduction, growth and toxin production. These conditions include prolonged spells of warm weather, enlarged areas of shallow stagnant water, alkalinity, an abundance of aquatic invertebrates, and oxygen depletion associated with large amounts of rotting vegetation and other organic matter. It has been demonstrated by past SFBBO studies that conditions in the south bay are suitable for outbreaks of avian botulism during the summer months. These outbreaks have been known to kill hundreds of waterfowl in the south bay. The most effective way to control the spread of the disease during an outbreak is to collect the sick and dead vertebrates. SFBBO will conduct weekly monitoring of the sloughs in the south bay from June through November.

BAIR ISLAND Nest count survey scheduled for April 21, 1990

A new era for this project began last season with the successful use of artificial nesting platforms by Great Blue Herons. As the native Coyote Brush continues to deteriorate on the island these nesting platforms are of great importance. This year we continued placing nesting platforms throughout the colony and more grapevine nests have been built and secured to these new platforms. In addition to Great Blue Heron platforms, we will try enticing some of the island's Black-crowned Night Herons to use a similar platform/nest structure. Prefabricated at our Bayside Cannery Building Headquarters both the nests and supporting platforms will be transported to Bair Island for installation. Once in place, additional surveys will be conducted to observe heron use of our "provided" nests.

KNAPP PROJECT Surveys conducted twice monthly year round

Entering its second year, this five year project investigates seasonal and annual effects of water chemistry and water levels on bird use within four salt evaporation ponds located in the South San Francisco Bay. These 1600 acres of ponds are important for migrating and wintering shorebirds. Indeed, 75% of the total number of shorebirds counted during the PRBO fall 1988 Shorebird Census were found in the South Bay, and a majority of those birds were on these four ponds. Objectives for 1990 include continued censusing, as well as gathering data on weather, salinity, water temperature and turbidity, water level, pond mapping and oxygen demands. A recent grant from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service will enable us to purchase equipment necessary for this project as we continue to better understand how changing conditions affect bird populations residing in and migrating through this pond system. Volunteers are needed for all aspects of this project.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT OF ALCATRAZ ISLAND Nesting surveys scheduled for April 28, 1990

SFBBO was contracted by the Golden Gate National Recreation Area staff to consult on this Black-crowned Night Heron colony on Alcatraz Island. Our study will establish the population and location of nesting Black-crowned Night Herons. With help from staff and volunteers heron nests will be tagged to check nesting fidelity. We also hope to band heron chicks with both service bands and color coded bands. Observation sights will be established to record buffer zones during the nesting season for the colony. Nesting surveys will begin on April 28, 1990.

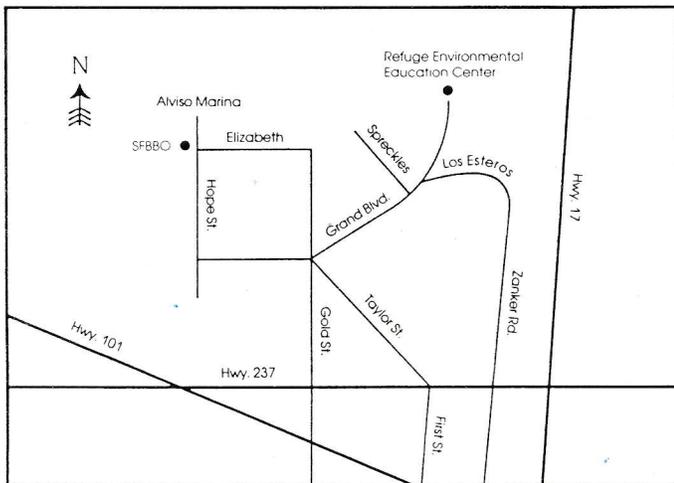
The 1990 breeding season is getting underway and schedules and plans are being made for the above projects. If you would like to volunteer your time for any of these studies please give the Bird Observatory a call at (408) 946-6548.

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 typically held on the first Thursday of each month, but are sometimes changed due to the availability of the speaker. The program starts 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 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.



SFBBO GENERAL MEETING PROGRAMS FOR 1990

General membership meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month (unless otherwise noted) at 7:30 p.m. at the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Environmental Education Center in Alviso. (see map)

March 1, 1990

Jan Dierks
Biologist
Topic: Her work with California Gull chicks at the Knapp Property Colony

April 5, 1990

Bob Drews,
Herpetologist
California Academy of Sciences
Topic: Frogs of Tropical Africa

May 2, 1990 *
Wednesdy

Luis Baptista
California Academy of Sciences
Topic: Socorro Island Project

* Denotes meetings not held on the 1st Thursday of the month.

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1290 Hope Street
Alviso, CA 95002
408-946-6548

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

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Make checks payable to SFBBO. Your 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.