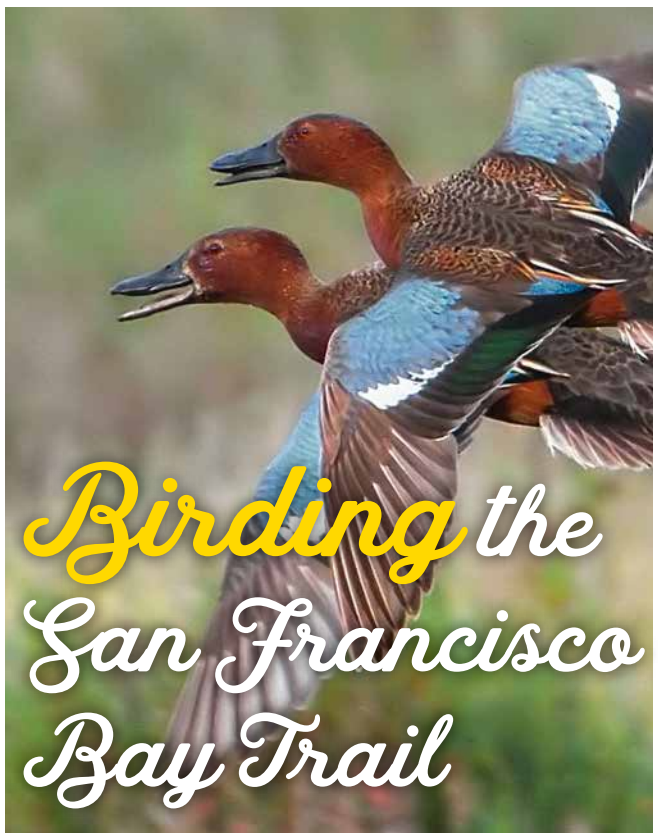

Birding the San Francisco Bay Trail

Facilities Available at Sites

- Parking
- Entry Fee
- Whole Access
- Restrooms (Flush or Chemical)
- Interpretive Center
- Interpretive Signs
- Benches
- Picnic Tables
- Boat Launch
- Camping

The Bay Trail is a planned 500-mile walking and cycling trail around the entire San Francisco Bay. When complete, it will connect the shoreline of all nine Bay Area counties, link 47 cities, and cross the seven major toll bridges in the region. To date, approximately 350 miles – over 70% of the Bay Trail's ultimate length – have been completed. The San Francisco Bay Trail is a project of the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. The 25-card Bay Trail map set can be purchased by visiting www.baytrail.org

SAN FRANCISCO BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY

The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of birds and their habitats through science and educational activities. SFBBO provides information to governmental agencies, industry, and the public to support informed resource management decisions for the San Francisco Bay area. SFBBO directed the production of this publication. For more info, visit www.sfbbo.org

Google

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ASSOCIATION OF BAY AREA GOVERNMENTS

1 Presidio

Dark-Eyed Junco

This area at the mouth of the San Francisco Bay offers grand views and a variety of birding. Battery Godfrey and Lands End west of the Golden Gate Bridge are hotspots where birds can be seen migrating north in spring and south in fall. Migration in spring includes swifts, warblers, orioles, and more. Many of the same species also pass through again in the fall, but at this time of year look especially for raptors crossing the Golden Gate strait from the Marin headlands. Large flocks of Vaux's Swifts are often seen overhead in fall while Elegant Terns are pursued intently by Parasitic Jaegers offshore. The best months for catching migration at the Presidio are April–May and September–October. Further east at Fort Mason, the bountiful crops at the Community Garden attract a variety of landbirds. Throughout much of the Presidio there are stands of mature Eucalyptus, Monterey cypress, and Monterey pine that were planted over 100 years ago. Since their planting, the tall trees have been colonized by forest species including Pygmy Nuthatches, Dark-eyed Juncos, and Red Crossbills. Directions: parking for Battery Godfrey is on Langdon Court in San Francisco, and on Pope Road for the community garden.

2 Heron's Head Park

Black Oystercatcher

Once slated to be a new shipping terminal in the 1970s, this slice of land ultimately became one of San Francisco's natural gems thanks to a wetland restoration project in the 1990s. Heron's Head Park is representative of what much of the San Francisco coastline once was: grassland uplands gently sloping into the pickleweed marsh bordering the bay. The pleasantly musical song of the many White-crowned Sparrows carries over the uplands, which are dotted with orange poppies in spring. On the mudflats a variety of ducks and shorebirds feed close to the trail during migration. Listen for the shrill calls from a pair of Black Oystercatchers that sometimes nest on the dilapidated pier in spring and summer. ***Directions: the park is located at 32 Jennings Street in San Francisco.***

3 Coyote Point Recreation Area

Surf Scoter

This former site of an Ohlone fishing village now has a marina, a museum, and a eucalyptus forest. A variety of sea ducks can be seen around Coyote Point, some of which are harder to find elsewhere in the bay. Surf Scoters, scaup (especially Greater), and Common Goldeneyes are all approachable as they dive for mollusks just offshore. There is sometimes a Harlequin Duck roosting on the rocks below the bluffs. Black Turnstones and Surfbirds scour the rocky shoreline in fall and winter, as do a few Wandering Tattlers from late summer through fall. The eucalyptus forest is busy with warblers and hummingbirds when the trees are flowering in winter, and also during migration when landbirds drop in. An unexpected denizen of this exotic forest is the Nuttall's Woodpecker, which is resident. The recreation area has attracted many rare birds over the years including Dusky Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. ***Directions: the park is located at 1701 Coyote Point Drive in San Mateo.***

4 Ravenswood Salt Pond SF2

Caspian Tern

The unusual topography of salt pond SF2 is the result of an ambitious restoration experiment by the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project. Initiated in 2008, thirty islands of varying shapes were created in the former salt pond to determine habitat preferences of nesting waterbirds. The experiment was a success, as today the pond supports nesting American Avocets, Caspian and Forster's Terns, and Black Skimmers. Another attraction here are the shorebird flocks, which can number in the tens of thousands at the peak of their migration in April. ***Directions: from the East Bay, cross the Dumbarton Bridge and exit at the Ravenswood National Wildlife Refuge sign. Drive the frontage road for 0.6 miles, go under the bridge, and park on the right. From the Peninsula, take Bayfront Expressway toward the Dumbarton Bridge. Exit at the Ravenswood National Wildlife Refuge sign and follow the frontage road to the parking on the left.***

5 Palo Alto Baylands

Black Skimmer

The Palo Alto Baylands and vicinity form an extensive complex of wetlands and uplands that has excellent birding opportunities throughout the year. Sora and Virginia's Rails can be heard calling from the fresh and brackish marshes, while Ridgway's Rails clamor in the salt marshes along the bay edge. The boardwalk around the Lucy Evans Nature Center is one of the best places to see the latter species as they strut through the exposed marsh channels. Black Rails are also occasionally seen here during king tides in winter. Northern Harriers patrol the marshes and uplands at Bixby Park during the day, and sometimes Short-eared Owls emerge at dusk from the adjacent Palo Alto Flood Control Basin in winter. A great diversity and abundance of waterbirds can be seen on the salt ponds at all times of the year. The baylands are home to a small breeding population of Black Skimmers and a Barrow's Goldeneye sometimes spends the winter at Shoreline Lake. The melodious song heard around the Rengstorff House in spring and summer comes from a nesting pair of Bullock's Orioles. ***Directions: parking for Shoreline Lake is at 3160 N Shoreline Boulevard in Mountain View; Bixby Park is at 2375 Embarcadero Road in Palo Alto; and the Lucy Evans Nature Center is at 2775 Embarcadero Road in Palo Alto.***

6 Alviso

American Wigeon

Several hotspots at the southern end of the bay include parts of Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Alviso Marina County Park, and nearby grasslands. At Don Edwards, decommissioned salt ponds provide expansive habitat for many waterbirds. Wintering ducks, shorebirds, and gulls flock to salt pond A16 especially, where nearly 200 species have been found. The islands in this pond provide an excellent study of gulls in the winter, and nesting Caspian and Forster's Terns in the summer. All three teal species plus Common Gallinule can be seen in nearby Mallard Slough. Just inland from here, Burrowing Owls are sometimes spotted on dirt mounds in the grassland viewable from Disk Drive. At Alviso Marina, the boardwalk crossing the

small brackish marsh is a reliable location for Black Rails, which are most vociferous in the summer. In fall and winter, the levees around this marsh host large flocks of sparrows. In spring and fall, tens of thousands of shorebirds gather at the ponds near the marina, and when flushed they swirl around in mesmerizing clouds. The many stellar rarities that have been found here over the years include Little Stint, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew Sandpiper, Chimney Swift, and even Greater Roadrunner! ***Directions: Alviso Marina is located at 1195 Hope Street in San Jose, and parking for Don Edwards NWR is at 1751 Grand Boulevard in San Jose.***

7 Coyote Hills Regional Park

Great-Tailed Grackle

The Coyote Hills are unique as the only naturally formed hills at the edge of the south bay. Interesting flora and geology adorning the hills are best enjoyed in early spring when the wildflowers are blooming. The park is home to most of the same birds found at other areas in the bay, but the oak woodland and tall grassland hills here offer something different. Rock Wrens spend the winter on the rocky outcrops protruding from the grassland slopes, while California Quails form coveys in the oak woodland below. The marshes have a growing population of Great-tailed Grackles and often an American Bittern. ***Directions: the park is located at 8000 Patterson Ranch Road in Fremont.***

8 Hayward Regional Shoreline

Northern Harrrier

The extensive network of trails around retired salt ponds at this park provides ample opportunity to explore the bay near Hayward. The mosaic of uplands, sloughs, and marshes is a paradise for Northern Harriers in the daytime, and hunting grounds at night for a few Short-eared Owls that spend the winter here. The center of the park—called Mt. Trashmore by locals — is a grassy plateau that attracts flocks of American Pipits and sometimes longspurs in the fall. A breeding colony of Least Terns can be seen on a short walk from the interpretive center at the southern end of the park. This endearing species is one of the rarest breeding birds in the bay. In the summer they are a delight to watch at the colony as they return from the bay and deliver fish to their mate or young. ***Directions: the interpretive center is located at 4901 Breakwater Avenue in Hayward. To access the center of the park, from Highway 880 in Hayward, go west on West Winton Avenue to the parking lot at the end. To access the northern end, take Grant Avenue west from Hesperian Boulevard just south of Highway 880; go to the parking lot at the end of the road.***

9 Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline

Ridgway's Rail

This park comprises much of the shoreline around San Leandro Bay, which is a small, sheltered area tucked behind Alameda and the Oakland Airport. Arrowhead Marsh is the prominent natural feature here. A boardwalk extending into the marsh provides one of the best opportunities to see the secretive Ridgway's Rail as they emerge from the cordgrass to forage in the winding slough channels at low tide. The king tides in winter sometimes coax a few Nelson's Sparrows to seek higher ground above the flooding marsh. The uplands along the Arrowhead Marsh Trail and Damon Marsh Trail have large sparrow flocks in fall and sometimes contain rare species such as Vesper and Brewer's Sparrow. ***Directions: parking is at the Arrowhead Marsh Staging Area at 1 Swan Way, and at the Damon Slough Staging Area on Oakport Street in Oakland.***

10 Lake Merritt

Greater Scaup

This lake in Oakland was originally a salt marsh named "Laguna Peralta," and then became the first National Wildlife Refuge in North America in 1869. The lake is a popular wintering site for a great variety of waterfowl. A few Barrow's Goldeneyes spend the winter here and the larger diving ducks such as Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, and Greater Scaup are unusually approachable at the shoreline. Every summer there are raucous nesting colonies of herons, egrets, and cormorants on the small islands in the lake. ***Directions: parking is along Bellevue Avenue in Oakland.***

11 Meeker Slough

White-Crowned Sparrow

The Bay Trail at this park is bordered on both sides by many slough channels and tidal mudflats. Shorebird diversity is especially reliable here at low tide, and often includes a Black Oystercatcher or Spotted Sandpiper on the rocky breakwater along some sections of the trail. Among numerous landbirds, this slough hosts one of the few breeding populations of White-crowned Sparrows inside the bay. ***Directions: access at the northern end is from the cul-de-sac on Bayside Drive in Richmond, and at the southern end from Point Isabel Dog Park.***

12 Point Pinole Regional Shoreline

Western Bluebird

Point Pinole is an expansive peninsula protruding into San Pablo Bay. The peninsula is covered in a patchwork of eucalyptus forest and grassland. At the edge of the peninsula the grassland gently slopes into the salt marshes forming a rare natural transition between these two habitats. The eucalyptus forest is inhabited by breeding Purple Finches and Bullock's Orioles in spring and summer, and many Yellow-rumped Warblers in the winter. A nest box project at this park has greatly enhanced the grassland habitat for cavity nesters such as Western Bluebird, House Wren, and Tree Swallow. In summer the swarms of Tree Swallows flying low over the grassland can be dizzying. ***Directions: the park is located at 5551 Giant Highway in Richmond.***

13 Benicia State Recreation Area

Red-Winged Blackbird

Tucked into a small bay on the Carquinez Strait, this park has impressive views of the strait and the grassy foothills rising above it. The salt marsh here is untouched and is home to most of the marsh birds found elsewhere in the bay. The fruiting trees in the small native botanic garden attract many birds during migration and winter. The hillside above the garden is part of Dillon Point, which is a nice place to spend an afternoon watching for raptors catching thermals overhead. The klaxon alarm of a Ring-necked Pheasant may be heard from the patches of sedges nearby. ***Directions: the park is located at 1 State Park Road in Benicia.***

14 John F. Kennedy Park

Bushtit

While some distance from the bay, this park maintains a connection via the Napa River which feeds into the bay's extensive sloughs and marshes further downstream. Much of the park is developed but along the western perimeter is a segment of the Bay Trail following the Napa River for nearly two miles. The trail is at the same level of the river so waterfowl are easily viewed here in fall and winter. An alameda of small oaks and cottonwoods line the trail and can have warblers and Oak Titmouses. When the deciduous trees along this trail lose their foliage in winter, old bird nests may be revealed. Look for the hanging nest of a Bushtit or the open stick nest of a Northern Mockingbird used in breeding seasons past. A duck pond on the entrance road is worth checking for interesting waterfowl that sometimes drop in. ***Directions: the park is located at 3291 Streblow Drive in Napa.***

15 Hudeman Slough

Cinnamon Teal

Hudeman Slough is one of many waterways through the expansive landscape of grain fields, vineyards, and wetlands in this area. The quiet levee trails at this park have panoramic views that include Mount Diablo, Mount Tamalpais, and the Napa-Sonoma wine country. Waterfowl and shorebirds are attracted to the area in great diversity, especially in spring and fall when birding is best. Cinnamon Teal breed in the marsh and an occasional Swainson's Hawk may be seen soaring overhead. ***Directions: the park is located at 25700 Ramal Road in Sonoma.***

16 Shollenberger Park

Common Gallinule

Shollenberger Park is an example of how wetlands benefit both wildlife and the citizens that live nearby. The park is a complex series of seasonal wetlands that provide high quality habitat for wildlife while serving as flood protection to nearby neighborhoods. Willows and elderberries in the uplands of the park attract many birds throughout the year, and the mudflats in the wetlands are always busy with various waterbirds, especially in spring and fall when the lower water level is favorable to shorebirds. Look for Common Gallinules hugging the shoreline of the wetlands and an occasional Pacific Golden-Plover on the mudflat in fall. ***Directions: the park is located at the southern end of Cader Lane in Petaluma.***

17 Las Gallinas Sanitary District Wildlife Area

Marsh Wren

Next to a waste water treatment plant, this site has a rich diversity of ducks, herons and egrets, shorebirds, swallows, and other wetland denizens. A levee trail leading from the parking area circles around several large ponds. The first pond along the trail is maintained as a wetland and has bulrushes, willows, and other vegetation busy with nesting Marsh Wrens and Common Yellowthroats. The many species at this pond now include Least Bittern, a recent addition to the breeding avifauna in this area. Listen for their understated coo-coo-coo call emanating from the wetland vegetation during the summer. The ponds further from the parking area are kept mostly denuded but they are still productive for waterfowl; look for Common Merganser and Common Goldeneye on these ponds. Tree and Cliff Swallows can be especially abundant at the ponds and surrounding open space in spring and summer. ***Directions: when approaching the entrance to John McInnis Park in San Rafael, cross the railroad tracks and turn left before the entrance, continuing on Smith Ranch Road to its end at the Las Gallinas Wildlife Area parking lot.***

18 China Camp State Park

White-Tailed Kite

China Camp State Park is a convenient, scenic getaway from the Bay Area metropolis. Salt marsh abuts hills covered in oak woodland creating an interesting juxtaposition of habitats found nowhere else in the bay. North San Pedro Road winds along the perimeter of the salt marsh and is suitable for leisurely birding. From this road, White-tailed Kites and Northern Harriers can be seen hunting for prey hiding in the marsh. The many trails leading into the hills above the marsh provide opportunities to see various landbirds such as Spotted Towhees and Wrentits. ***Directions: park at China Camp Village or other locations along North San Pedro Road in San Rafael.***

19 Corte Madera Marsh Ecological Reserve

Song Sparrow

As with many places in the bay, there is an abrupt transition from the urban sprawl to the marshes of Corte Madera Marsh Ecological Reserve. Once inside the park it is a peaceful place where the sound of clamoring Ridgway's Rails and buzzing Song Sparrows are principals of the soundscape. There is a bicycle path around the uplands and single-track trails further to the north and south that are worth exploring. Some of the trails are small rises above the marsh allowing a unique, close-up view of this habitat. ***Directions: take the Industrial Avenue exit off Highway 101 and continue one block to the parking area at the end.***