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VOL 91 NO 4 MAY 2006

THE GULL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY



FOUNDED 1917



Western Gulls pair bonding on Alcatraz.

Edde Bartley

CALIFORNIA
ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

APR 28 2006

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The Birds of Alcatraz

On March 9th, bad weather briefly gave way to perfect clear skies for the special Golden Gate Audubon members-only monthly birding expedition to legendary Alcatraz Island.

National Park Service biologist Christian Hellwig served as our guide for the two-hour tour of this remarkable environment, which, beyond its status as a tourist destination, surprisingly also serves as an important Bay Area bird refuge.

"Alcatraz is not well known as a place to watch birds," said Christian, "but it is a great place to watch birds."

In fact, considering the barrenness of Alcatraz's original environment and the subsequent impact of human civilization on the island, the variety of bird species that nest there is cause for amazement.

Approximately 1,000 pairs of Western Gulls nest on Alcatraz. Despite the gulls' penchant for dominating whatever territory they occupy, about 800 pairs of Brandt's Cormorants, one of only two estuarine populations on the West Coast, have established a foothold. Pelagic Cormorants also nest there, though their population currently stands at only around six pairs. Thirteen pairs of California Gulls and, at times, up to 40 pairs of Pigeon Guillemots share the island, along with Black Phoebes, Black Oystercatchers and Black-crowned Night Herons.

Not only seabirds call Alcatraz home: House Finches, White-crowned Sparrows and Song Sparrows nest in their niches; Anna's Hummingbirds breed and raise

THE BIRDS OF ALCATRAZ continued on page 12

Bird Flu and You: Quick Facts

In December 2005, a highly pathogenic form of influenza A, the H5N1 strain, was reported in Southeast Asia. Because it was first discovered in domestic poultry, it has since been commonly referred to as "avian influenza." So far the virus has not evolved to spread easily between humans. But if it does, the virus could reach pandemic proportions.

At the time this article went to press, avian flu had been recorded in Asia, Europe, and Africa, but had still not reached Australia, North America, or South America. Experts believe, however, that the H5N1 virus could reach North America by fall 2006, if migrating birds from Asia transfer the disease across the Bering Strait and infect North American birds.

Among the growing concerns over this potential pandemic are how it affects wild birds and whether transmission between wild native birds and humans is possible. Some countries have proposed draining wetland habitat or killing off wild populations of those species most likely to commingle in ponds with domestic species, such as waterfowl and shorebirds, in order to curb the spread of the H5N1 virus. Such a technique would not only be destructive to vital bird populations, however, but counterproductive. It could cause further dispersal and more concentrated populations of stressed birds that would be even more prone to infection.

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The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 15, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Society Supporting Membership is \$25 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. The board of directors meets the last Monday of every month (except August and December) at 7:30 p.m. in the chapter office in Berkeley.

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Golden Gate Audubon Connects with Other Audubon Chapters

At the fourth annual Audubon Urban Chapters Network (AUCN) meeting, hosted by Audubon Society of Portland in March, I joined representatives from 10 urban Audubon chapters around the country to share information on conservation issues, learn about opportunities to build and strengthen our chapters, and discuss our common challenges. Among topics we discussed were fee-based environmental education programs for children and adults, summer camps, travel programs, urban conservation initiatives, and Important Bird Areas.

Since Golden Gate Audubon hosted the first AUCN meeting in Berkeley in 2003, the network has grown, drawing chapters from New York City, Atlanta, Tucson, Seattle, western Pennsylvania and others. The network has become a critical way to help urban chapters grow and strengthen their programs. We are excited to share best practices to make Audubon's larger, urban chapters more successful, and we plan to invite more chapters that share our commitment to growth and excellence to join us.

by Elizabeth Murdock, Executive Director

More than 200 representatives of Audubon chapters from throughout California gathered for the Audubon California 2006 Assembly at Asilomar conference grounds in mid-March. During two-and-a-half rain-soaked days, we learned about and discussed topics ranging from the current threats to the Endangered Species Act to the coming threat of avian flu (see page 1); from the projected population growth of California (50 million by 2040) to the impacts of wind turbines on birds. We shared fundraising and event ideas, such as Morro Bay's unique way to reach non-Audubon members by hosting DJ parties (called "Loons and Tunes") that attract 200 young people.

Brock Evans, chair of the Endangered Species Coalition, a former vice president of National Audubon and life-long environmentalist, inspired us with his knowledge and optimism about the future of the environmental movement. Evans, who survived life-threatening bone marrow cancer, knows first-hand about overcoming obstacles. (He told his physician, "I'm used to fighting hopeless causes. I'm an environmentalist.") Steve Blank, the energetic, newly elected chair of Audubon California's board of directors and member of the National Audubon Society (NAS) board, assured us that NAS supports chapters and is eager to help us. And we met members of other chapters, many too small to have a staff or even an office and yet still successfully run programs, produce newsletters, raise funds and host events, entirely with volunteers.

Regardless of chapter size, it's clear that California's Audubon community is made up of savvy, hard working people who are determined to protect and revitalize the wildlife and grandeur of our state. It's also clear that California needs every one of us! (For more information about Audubon's state office, visit www.ca.audubon.org.)

by Marjorie Blackwell, President

Remember to Vote for Golden Gate Audubon Board Members!

The 2006 annual election of Golden Gate Audubon Board Directors will be held by written ballots due on May 16, 2006. The three candidates for elected directors this year are Bob Bennett, Bob Lewis, and Sylvia Stone. See the April *Gull* or visit our website (www.goldengateaudubon.org) for more information on the candidates and a ballot form. The online ballot must be printed out and sent by mail. Mail ballots to: Golden Gate Audubon, 2530 San Pablo Ave., Suite G, Berkeley, CA 94702.

Why Eco-Oakland Volunteers Love Their Work

Golden Gate Audubon's Eco-Oakland volunteers are the lifeblood of our environmental education program. Here's what a few of these dedicated individuals have to say about their experiences.

SUSAN GROVES

I'll tell you how it feels...to watch a child burst into excitement upon finding a hummingbird in a schoolyard bush on International Boulevard; to stand on the Arrowhead Marsh pier, sharing wonder with a child as the silence is shredded by the raucous racket of the Clapper Rails; to listen to an enthusiastic teacher and his fast-motion students describe the sea urchins they saw at an ocean tidepool. For me it feels, "Wow! Now *there's* one thing right in this world!"

How will there be anything left of this planet if we don't teach our children to love it and walk in its meadows with knowledge and awe? I have been a teacher all my professional life, so I feel right at home working with kids and in classrooms. But this is the first time I've worked in science education. And it just makes sense—for me as a citizen, and for GGA as an environmental organization. If you care about the future, this is where you have to be!

Susan Groves is also the volunteer GGA Field Trip Coordinator



Amiko Meyer

BEN GREENFIELD

For my 9-to-5 job, I am a scientist studying San Francisco Bay. Although the results of my studies are used by other scientists and environmental regulators, it's often difficult to see tangible impacts on the community. GGA bridges this gap by providing scientifically focused educational programs to students and educators in local schools.

I was particularly interested in Eco-Oakland because it links environmental and social justice issues and it focuses on poorly funded, East Oakland schools that serve predominantly African American and Latin American students. Eco-Oakland is mindful of the greater cultural needs of these communities; at the after-school and weekend environmental biology programs, all family members are encouraged to attend and participate, and all programs have a bilingual component. I've had the opportunity to share my knowledge of marine and estuarine ecology with students and their families, and have also learned more about the local culture and communities from them. Some of my fondest memories are working and learning with the families in the tide pools and river channels of Marin beaches. The excitement of the school kids and their younger siblings is infectious as they get their



Amiko Mayeno

feet wet crossing the cool creeks and check out the sea anemones, crabs, barnacles, and other intertidal fauna. It's fun to see the parents get involved, talking about the kinds of seafood they would find and harvest in Mexico or Central America. I think learning the amazing natural offerings of the region is so important, and these programs leave me feeling hopeful that the sense of family, connectedness and natural stewardship will go hand in hand.

Ben Greenfield is an environmental scientist who has worked at the San Francisco Estuary Institute

JESUS LARA

I was interested in getting involved with the Eco-Oakland program because most of the participants are minority families who do not have the opportunity to go out regularly and learn about nature. Being an environmental science major at UC Berkeley and a Spanish speaker, I felt that my skills could add to the success of the program. I have been on trips to Muir Beach where I have learned about the plants and the animals in the area. I have also re-learned how to enjoy nature as a kid. A memorable experience I have is racing with kids to the top of a hill and watching the ocean. Their excitement to interact with nature is contagious and makes volunteering a rewarding experience. The best part about the program is that it brings families closer together and makes them environmentally conscious through fun activities.

Jesus Lara is a junior at UC Berkeley



MAYRA VENEGAS

I was able to become a volunteer a year ago through a field trip that we went on with my sister to Muir Beach. I really enjoyed that day because I also learned new things. I also like the idea that they offer the field trip to the family. You are able to explore the beautiful things this world has. I started volunteering by going to meetings after school and to the field trips they had on Saturdays. I needed to do my community service and they offer it. I really liked it when we went to clean up the park. I think it helped me value more the environment around us. I think more people should volunteer so that they could help the community and keep the environment clean.

It helped me because I was able to get distracted from the usual routine I had. You are also able to get to know different people. You interact with them and learn things from them. I also like being around kids and helping them learn new things.

Mayra Venegas is a 12th grade student at Skyline High School in Oakland



Amiko Mayeno



EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT UPDATE

Long Term Protection for Breuner Marsh
 The East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) board of directors voted unanimously in early March to condemn 218 acres of the Breuner Property in favor of integrating the marsh into EBRPD park lands. "This has been 56 years in the making," said Parchester Village Neighborhood Council President Whitney Dotson, whose family has been advocating for a park since Parchester was first developed after World War II. "It's hard to believe it's finally true." The wetlands, adjacent to EBRPD's Point Pinole Regional Shoreline Park, attract innumerable species of birds and other wildlife, including such special-status species as the California Clapper Rail, Black Rail, and Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse.

New Ward 1 Board Member. On March 17th, the Board unanimously elected Nancy Skinner as the new Ward 1 member of the EBRPD Board. Following in the footsteps of the late Jean Siri, Nancy represents Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, El Cerrito, El Sobrante, Kensington, a portion of Oakland, a small part of Pinole, Richmond and San Pablo. Nancy is also a member of Golden Gate Audubon.

DOGS AND WILDLIFE IN THE GGNRA

For years, debate has raged in San Francisco about whether dogs should be allowed to romp off-leash in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). Though it adjoins a major urban area, the GGNRA protects more federally listed species than any other unit of the National Park System in the continental U.S. Federal law generally requires that pets in national parks be leashed or otherwise confined at all times. But a history of non-enforcement in the GGNRA has weakened the Park Service's ability to enforce the leash law—and thus to protect the many sensitive bird, plant and other wildlife species, including the federally protected Western Snowy Plover—that rely upon the GGNRA as habitat. Golden

Gate Audubon currently is participating in a negotiated rulemaking committee, convened by the Department of Interior, to work with the National Park Service to develop regulations regarding dogs in the GGNRA. While we recognize the diverse demands on the GGNRA by its many users, we are committed to ensuring that the Park Service upholds its responsibility to protect wildlife in the park.

BURROWING OWL HABITAT AT THE ALBANY PLATEAU

When Burrowing Owls were first discovered in the area slated to be the new Gilman Sports Fields, GGA and other conservation organizations suggested Albany Plateau as a suitable place to mitigate for the project and to establish additional Burrowing Owl habitat. Since then, Golden Gate Audubon has worked closely with sports field user groups, the East Bay Regional Park District and the cities of Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville and Richmond to implement this compromise.

The California Department of Fish and Game, East Bay Regional Park District and California State Parks are now all on board with our joint proposal to protect more than eight acres at the Plateau for Burrowing Owls. And with construction of five Gilman Sports fields about to begin, we are eager to launch the expanded and improved habitat for Burrowing Owls.

PRESERVE THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

The Endangered Species Act (ESA), one of our last remaining safety nets for birds, other wildlife and their habitats, is under attack in Congress. Both the House and the Senate have introduced bills that, if passed, will seriously cripple the Act and its ability to protect wildlife. These bills include provisions that require compensation to landowners for complying with the ESA, create exemptions for Section 7 consultation (a mandatory consultation with Fish and Wildlife Service on any project with a federal nexus that will harm a listed species), add a significant two-year delay for



Charles Denson

Burrowing Owl.

getting species listed under the ESA, and eliminate the requirement to designate critical habitat. Please contact Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein and tell them you support a strong Endangered Species Act and healthy wildlife populations. They can be reached at 202.224.3553 and 202.224.3841, respectively. Or visit www.senate.gov to reach them by email or mail.

MONITORS NEEDED ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BAY!

Count Quail in San Francisco GGA is partnering with the Presidio Trust on a Presidio-wide monitoring project. Volunteer programs are held from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. on Saturdays, May 13, July 15 and September 19 (see *April Gull* for details). For information, contact Jacob Winiacki at 510.843.7295 or jwiniacki@goldengateaudubon.org.

Last Shore State Park GGA is collecting valuable census data, which now includes a Breeding Bird Survey. Volunteers needed Wednesdays and Saturdays, May 10 and 20, June 3 and 21, July 5 and 22. For more information, please contact Carolyn Kolka at libbydemo@juno.com or 510.549.0411.



Talks in the Speaker Series begin at 7:30 p.m. At 7 p.m., healthful, delicious, snack is served by hospitality coordinator, Susanne Shields. Golden Gate Audubon Speaker Series coordinators Sarah Reed and Matteo Garbelotto facilitate programs in Berkeley and San Francisco, respectively.

Adventures of a Wildlife Photographer From Kenya to the Alameda Wildlife Refuge

Friday, May 12
San Francisco

Award-winning wildlife photographer Eleanor Briccetti will share her experiences of photographing birds and other wildlife in Texas, Africa, the Galapagos Islands, and other parts of the world, as well as the Alameda Wildlife Refuge. Her presentation will feature one-of-a-kind photographs of birds and other wildlife unique to those areas, including the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, and Green Jay in Texas, the Crowned Crane, Little Bee-eater, and Superb Starling in Kenya, and endemic species in the Galapagos Islands, including the Swallow-tailed Gull, Lava Heron, Galapagos Hawk, Galapagos (or Giant) Tortoise, and Marine and Land Iguanas. Briccetti, a Golden Gate Audubon volunteer, will also share her outstanding photos of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge and the struggling Least Tern colony.

County Fair Building, San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum, Golden Gate Park (Ninth Ave. at Lincoln Way). Directions: www.sfbotanicalgarden.org/visiting/page2.html

Raptor Identification: Pointers and Pitfalls

Thursday, May 18
Berkeley

Raptors—hawks, eagles, and falcons, among others—evoke power, swiftness, and grace. These magnificent birds of prey are often regarded as icons of the California landscape. However, certain raptor species can be hard to identify out in the field. Certain buteos and occasionally eagles can present difficulties, and some species, particularly Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks, are notorious for their frequent confusion. Find out how to distinguish various types of raptors through the expert guidance of Hans Peeters, author of *Raptors of California*, as he shares slides, stories, and secrets of identification. After discussing the various physical and behavioral points to look for, he'll show some slides for a fun self-test. By the end of the evening, you'll be a pro!

Hans Peeters is professor emeritus of biology/zoology at Chabot College. His illustrations have appeared in many bird guides including The American Bird Conservancy's *All the Birds of North America* (1997), *Book of North American Birds* (1990), and the Smithsonian's forthcoming *Birds of India*. An award-winning painter, two of his depictions of Golden Eagles have appeared on Mexican stamps.

Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda (between Solano and Marin)
Directions: www.northbrae.org/directions.htm

Save the Date: Return of the Terns Festival

This annual festival will be held Sunday, June 18, from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Crab Cove Visitor Center, 1251 McKay Ave., in Alameda. Join a Fish and Game wildlife biologist on bus tours to the Alameda Wildlife Refuge to see endangered California Least Terns tending their chicks. Enjoy slide shows of spectacular terns and children's craft activities at the Visitor Center. More details in June *Gull*.

Summer Birding Classes

Golden Gate Audubon is offering the following classes at Albany Adult School. Contact the school at 510.559.6580 for registration details. More information is available at <http://home.comcast.net/~rlewis727>

Introduction to Bird Sounds

Friday, May 12

This 2-hour classroom session and 3–4 hour field class is designed to increase awareness of local bird sounds. Knowledge of vocal and non-vocal bird sounds can be a valuable tool to identify birds, especially when they are hard to see. Listening to bird sounds also adds enjoyment and interest to birding.

Class: Thursday, June 22, 7–9 p.m.

Field class: Saturday, June 24 at Tilden Regional Park

Breeding Birds of the East Bay Wetlands

Friday, May 12

Not all ducks and shorebirds leave us in spring. Waterfowl and shorebirds nest in the East Bay, and songbirds, raptors and others use our wetland environments. Colonial nesting waterbirds, such as terns, also arrive in spring to raise their young. We will visit fresh and saltmarsh locations to learn about these species.

Two lectures: Wednesdays, June 14 and June 21, 7–8:30 p.m.

Two half day field trips: Saturdays, June 17 and June 24

Birding Basics

Friday, May 12

This 5-week course for beginning birders will focus on finding and identifying the more common birds in our area, as well as use of binoculars, field guides and other birding tools.

From June 13 – July 22. No classes July 4 or 8
Lectures: Tuesdays, 7:00–8:30 p.m.

Field trips: Saturdays, locations to be announced



FIELD TRIPS

SUSAN GROVES, COORDINATOR

\$ Entrance fee

 Biking trip

Detailed trip descriptions are located on our website at www.goldengateaudubon.org. If you need further information or have difficulty reaching a trip leader, please contact Susan Groves at 510.654.5954 or groves.susan@gmail.com.

Wednesday at Arrowhead Marsh

Take 401

Wednesday, May 3, 9:30 a.m.

Courtenay Peddle, 510.532.8911 (no calls before 9 a.m.), capeddle@there.net

Meet at Marsh parking lot to see up to 14 species of ducks, and possibly Clapper Rails. Bring scope if you have one.

Take I-880 south to Hegenberger; west on Hegenberger to Doolittle Dr. Right on Doolittle, right on Swan Way. Left into MLK park. Drive to end for Arrowhead Marsh parking lot.

Las Gallinas

Marin County

Thursdays, May 4, 11, 18, 25,
8:30 a.m. – noon

Bruce Bajema, 415.456.6271

Meet at the Las Gallinas parking lot to join Marin Auduboners in seeing a variety of bird species. Heavy rain cancels.

Sunol Regional Park

Southern Alameda County

Saturday, May 6, 8:30 a.m.

Bruce Mast, 510.435.1371,
Bmast@alumni.rice.edu

Meet at ranger station parking lot inside park near the green barn. We will explore creekside habitat up to Little Yosemite, looking for migrants, sparrows, raptors, and local breeding birds. Bring lunch. \$

Take I-680 south, about 8 miles beyond intersection of I-580. Exit at Calaveras Rd., go left (South) and follow the signs to Sunol Regional Park, about 5 miles

Carpool to Field Trips

It's easy to carpool on GGA field trips. To join the mail list group, just go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/GGACarPool>. Once you join, you can send and receive messages about carpools to GGA field trips. Give your message a title, "Offer Ride" or "Need Ride," plus location and date of the field trip. In the body of the message, note your approximate location (El Cerrito, South Berkeley, etc.). Others who read your message will contact you to arrange a carpool. Give it a try! If you have a problem, e-mail Bob Lewis at RLewis0727@aol.com.

Birding for Everyone

San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum

Saturdays, May 6, June 3,
10 a.m. – noon

Angie Geiger and Nancy DeStefanis, San Francisco Nature Education, 415.387.9160, www.sfnature.org; Darin Dawson, Botanical Garden Docent

Meet at kiosk at front gate of Garden, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. Families welcome. Children must be accompanied by adult.

Co-sponsored with San Francisco Nature Education and Botanical Garden.

Wildcat Canyon Regional Park

Alameda County

Sunday, May 7, 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Malcolm Sproul, 925.376.8945

Meet by Arlington Clubhouse on Arlington Ave. in El Cerrito. Details and directions in *April Gull*.

San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum

San Francisco

Sundays, May 7, June 4, 8 a.m.

Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna, 415.566.3241; Ginny Marshall, 650.349.3780

For this half-day trip, meet at front gate of Botanical Garden, Ninth Ave. at Lincoln Way. The garden has several micro-habitats that attract an array of resident, migrant, and vagrant birds.

Brushy Peak

Livermore

Tuesday, May 9, 8:30 a.m.

Bob Lewis, 510.845.5001,
rlewis0727@aol.com

Brushy Peak is a new East Bay Regional Park in the shadow of Altamont Pass wind farms. Meet at parking area at end of Laughlin Rd. A first chance to look for spring birds: raptors, buntings, grosbeaks and flycatchers. About 4 miles round trip, with some elevation gain. Bring liquids, hat, sunscreen, hiking boots.

Take I-580 east toward Livermore. Exit North at Vasco Rd. and immediately turn right onto Northfront Rd. After about 0.8 mile turn left onto Laughlin Rd. and proceed about 2 miles to staging area at the end of the road. About 1.5 hour drive from Berkeley.

Alcatraz Island

Thursdays, May 11, June 8

Christian Hellwig, 415.561.4908,
christian_hellwig@nps.gov and
Pamela Llewellyn, 510.843.7904,
seacreature219@sbcglobal.net

Join NPS biologist Christian Hellwig for bird walks on Alcatraz, offered exclusively to GGA Supporting Members (See article on page 1). In May, night-herons start fledging, and other chicks hatch. In June, other chicks begin fledging. In July, most Western Gulls fledge. E-mail Pamela with name(s), date of walk, and contact info. She will confirm reservation and send travel information. \$

Condor Watch 2006

Pinnacles National Monument

Saturday, May 13, 8 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Allen Fish; Bob Power,
rcpower@sbcglobal.net

Third annual condor watch in Pinnacles National Monument. Meet at Bear Gulch Visitor Center. We will hike up Condor Gulch Trail to High Peaks Trail, maximizing chances to see California Condors, nesting Prairie Falcons, and nesting Peregrine Falcon. Approx. 5.5-mile hike with 1300-foot elevation gain, in desert heat. Carry 2–4 quarts of water. Trip limited to 30 participants. Contact Bob for more info.

Garin Regional Park

April 2006

Sunday, May 14, 8 a.m.

Anne Hoff, 510.845.5908,
Anne2210b@sbcglobal.net

Meet in parking lot. Park offers a delightful riparian corridor where Yellow and Wilson's Warblers, Pacific Slope Flycatchers, Western Bluebirds and Bullock's Orioles may be seen and heard at close range. Details and directions in *April Gull*.

Point Reyes

National Seashore Habitats

Friday, May 19, 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

David Wimpfheimer, 415.663.1363,
www.calnaturalist.com

Meet at Five Brooks Trailhead. Spring migration is excellent time to see large variety of birds in diverse Pt. Reyes areas. At Five Brooks Pond, we will look for resident and Neotropical migrants including warblers and flycatchers; also Green Heron, Wood Duck and Purple Martin. Osprey and Caspian Tern feed over Tomales Bay. Near Chimney Rock and the Lighthouse, breeding Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot and cormorants; migrant loons, scoters and others are on the move. Heavy rain cancels.

Trailhead is about 6 miles south of Olema on Hwy 1. About 1-hr. drive from Golden Gate Bridge.

Corona Heights

April 2006

Friday, May 19, 8 a.m.

Charles Hibbard, Lewis Ellingham,
Brian Fitch

Meet at front of Randall Museum, end of Museum Way off Roosevelt. Stunning views of city and bay as we circle Corona Heights, check east canyon woodland and north forest for residents and migrants, and monitor the hilltop scrub and south cliff. For more information, contact Margaret Goodale, 415.554.9500, ext. 16, mgoodale@randallmuseum.org.

Lake Merritt

Saturday, May 20, 8 a.m.

Travis Hails, 510.451.1207 (no calls after 9 p.m.), travishails@yahoo.com

Meet at large spherical cage near Nature

Bicycle Trips

Kathy Jarrett

510.547.1233 (call for cell number, no calls after 9 p.m.), Kathy.Jarrett@comcast.net
Bicycle helmet required. Bring lunch and liquids. Dress in layers. Plan carefully.

BART schedules: www.transitinfo.org **Capitol Corridor schedules:** www.capitolcorridor.com

Canal Trail Martinez Regional Shoreline

Sunday, May 28

Meet at Pleasant Hill BART by the turnstile at 9 a.m., or 9:15 at Heather Farm Park, 301 N. San Carlos Drive, Walnut Creek. We begin birding at Heather Farm Park. Then head west on Canal Trail for 5 miles, ride on bike lanes on Alhambra Ave. for 5 miles to Martinez Regional Shoreline. Sunday Farmers Market in Martinez. Must be able to bicycle up moderate grade for 5+ miles with minimal stops. Return by cycling back to Pleasant Hill or take Capitol Corridor train from Martinez to Richmond or beyond. Call leader to confirm. Bring a bungee cord if you bring bike on the train.

Car: Hwy 24 east to Walnut Creek, then I-680 N toward Concord. Exit at Ygnacio Valley Rd. Turn right on Ygnacio Valley Rd, go 1.9 miles and turn left on N. San Carlos Dr. Go to parking lot at far end. Meet at north end of the north pond. East Bay Regional Park District info and trail maps at www.etpark.org.

Arrowhead Marsh

April 2006

Saturday, June 10

Meet at 7:50 a.m. at Fruitvale BART Station in Oakland or 8:10 a.m. at East Creek Point trailhead. Ride S.F. Bay Trail from East Creek Point to Damon Marsh, Arrowhead Marsh, and the Doolittle Pond Wildlife Sanctuary. Then follow other trails in Alameda before returning to Fernside and BART. All levels of birders and bicyclists welcome.

Car: Exit I-880 at High St. in Oakland and go SW to the High St. Bridge to Alameda. Cross bridge and turn left onto Fernside and park on street. Bike back over bridge, turn right onto Tidewater Ave. and go 0.25 mi. to the East Creek Point trailhead on the right. **BART:** Fruitvale BART Station in Oakland is just south of Fruitvale Ave. between E. 12th St. and San Leandro Blvd. Meet outside turnstile and ride city streets to trailhead with leaders. Bay Trail info and maps at <http://baytrail.abag.ca.gov>.

Center at Perkins & Bellevue Sts. Trip designed for novice and intermediate birders; also to study birds more difficult to identify. Focus on water birds and on smaller birds in parklands bordering lake. Vagrant species occur frequently. Handicapped accessible.

Bus: 12, N, or NL bus to Grand & Perkins. Enter park on Perkins. **Car:** park in free lot at the boathouse, 568 Bellevue

Mitchell Canyon

Sunday, May 21, 8:30 a.m.

Pamela Llewellyn, 925.413.8329,
seacreature219@sbcglobal.net

Meet at parking lot for half-day trip. Variety of passerines and raptors are drawn to this dry valley climate. Past highlights include nesting Western Wood-pewee, Black-headed Grosbeak and Cooper's Hawk.

Also Golden Eagle, Phainopepla and Lazuli Bunting. Bring liquids, snacks and sunscreen. Wear good walking shoes.

Take Hwy 24 east through Caldecott Tunnel to Walnut Creek, exit Ygnacio Valley Rd. Go approx. 8 miles, turn right on Clayton Rd. After 1 mile, turn right on Mitchell Canyon Rd. Follow to end of trail.

Eastshore State Park Albany Bulb

Tuesday, May 23, 10 a.m.

Hilary Powers, 510.834.1066.

hilary@powersedit.com Ruth Tobey
510.528.2093, ruthtobey@earthlink.net

Meet in lot at west end of Buchanan St., Albany. We'll bird bulb and adjacent plateau area and scope birds along Albany beach as tide recedes. Terrain rough and uneven. Wear sturdy walking shoes.

From I-80, take Buchanan Street exit and drive west. The street ends at the parking lot.

FIELD TRIPS continued on page 9



March's theme was rain, rain, and more rain. A record-breaking number of rainy days appeared to delay nesting activity and migratory movements and almost certainly discouraged birders from setting foot outdoors. Aside from a few scattered first-of-season sightings, reports tended to focus on continuing winter birds. One apparent effect of the storm series in late Feb. and early Mar. was to force several Horned Puffins to the SM coast and Monterey Bay. Per DaS, International Bird Rescue Research Center reported receiving seriously weakened Horned Puffins from Bradley Beach (SM) on Feb. 17 and La Selva Beach (SCZ) on Feb. 27. The first bird was treated and released but the 2nd bird was too far gone. Birders also reported live Horned Puffins off the Pajaro River mouth (SCZ/MTY) on Feb. 21 and in Monterey Harbor (MTY) on Mar. 22 and 23.

LOONS TO DUCKS

Waterbirds maintained a distinctly winter distribution pattern. Red-necked Grebes continued through at least the 17th at Shadow Cliffs RP, ALA (AEd; mob); Bodega Harbor, MRN (FH); and Crissy Field, SF (HF; mob). As in Feb., tube-nose reports were limited to Northern Fulmars along the SM coast. High counts came nowhere near the Feb. high (72) but at least 5 prowled just beyond the surf line at Venice SB in Half Moon Bay on Mar. 10 (BB).

Overwintering geese remained in evidence, including Snow, Ross's, and Cackling. A flock of 22 Cackling Geese and 1 Brant were noted along the Napa River floodplain at Kennedy Park, NAP, on the 25th (MB). On the 4th, a Tundra Swan was observed feeding alongside several Mute Swans at Gray's Ranch, near Shollenberger Park, SON (BD). Four days later, an airborne Tundra Swan traversed Tilden RP (CC) air space, headed toward SF Bay (JP).

Holdover ducks included a number of Eurasian Wigeons, a Eurasian Green-winged Teal at Pescadero Marsh, SM, and several Tufted Ducks. The drake Harlequin Duck off the SF coast at Mile Rock con-

tinued through the 26th (EK; HF). Birders reported 7 White-winged Scoters this month: 2 at Venice SB in Half Moon Bay, SM, on the 17th (RT); 3 at Bodega Bay, SON, on the 18th (EDB); and 2 at Moss Beach, SM, on the 22nd (RT). A Black Scoter lingered off Crissy Field, SF, through the 12th (DA) and Blacks made seawatch reports from 3 SM locations, including 5 birds offshore at Pescadero Cr., SM, on the 26th (RT). A second-hand report from Palo Alto Baylands, SCL, on the 16th described a fly-in of 4 Long-tailed Ducks, behaving like 2 mated pairs (JSk; reported by JC).

RAPTORS TO ALCIDS

No reports came in this month from the raptor hotspots in eastern SOL but birders reported a few Bald Eagles in MRN and CC and Golden Eagles in the expected high-country locations. On the 4th, a birder who thought to look up at the Botanical Garden in Tilden Park, CC, was rewarded with a circling dark morph Swainson's Hawk (ADM).

Through the 20th, a quartet of Mountain Plovers stayed put near the Richard "Fresh Air" Janson Bridge on Highway 37, SON (AW, DSh; mob). Coyote Pt. marsh, SM, provided signs of spring shorebird movements in the form of 11 Red Knots on the 1st (BP).

On Mar. 8, 3 more Slaty-backed Gulls (*Larus schistisagus*) continued the saga at Venice SB in Half Moon Bay, SM (RT, AJ). Our only CBRC review species this month, the trio included an adult first seen in January and an adult and 2nd-cycle bird that may be new to the flock. If so, the season's tally would be up to 11 individuals. A half dozen Glaucous Gulls, mostly 1st-cycle, were HD'd coastside at Venice SB, Moss Beach, and Bodega Bay and bayside at EEC in Alviso (SCL) and Palo Alto Baylands (RT, BB, DVP, AEi, MM, FV, RS). Pigeon Pt., SM, seawatches yielded 1 Black-legged Kittiwake on the 18th and 4 more on the 26th (RT). The Black Skimmer flock, numbering 28+, returned to Charleston Slough, SCL, by the 19th (RW; BB, FV). The flock



Horned Puffin.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

is believed to have over-wintered in outer Salt Pond A1.

More than 500 Marbled Murrelets were counted off Ocean Blvd in Moss Beach, SM, on the 1st, a 200 bird increase over the Feb. high count 8 days prior (RT). Since the SCZ/SM breeding population is estimated at just 600 birds, it is thought this flock represents an influx from the north (per DaS). Ancient Murrelet sightings were limited to 1 bird off Ocean Blvd in Moss Beach, SM, on the 1st and 2 more at Pigeon Pt. on the 26th (RT).

DOVES TO THRASHERS

Burrowing Owls maintained their vigils at the usual ground squirrel holes in ALA and SCL. At Muir Woods National Monument, MRN, the resident Barred Owl began calling along the Alice Eastwood trail on the 23rd (DA). Per park staff, the Spotted Owl pairs at Muir Woods have been pushed from the forest and not nested in several years due to continued aggression from the Barred Owl.

Beginning on the 4th, birders learned of a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker across from the Cal-State East Bay Campus in Newhall



BACKYARD BIRDER

MEG PAULETICH

You always feel an adrenaline rush when you spot a new bird to add to your list, whether you're on a trip to Africa, exploring a different state, or peering at the feeder in your backyard. One of my favorite sightings was a Rose-breasted Grosbeak alongside its cousin, the Black-headed Grosbeak, at my sunflower feeder one summer day. I was lucky that the Rose-breasted Grosbeak, rarely seen in this state, cooperated by staying around long enough for my friends to enjoy it.

Backyard sightings can be the most exciting. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has a program, Project FeederWatch, in which you may enroll. Thanks to the many birders filing reports, the lab is able to note all sorts of unusual sightings. The records are proving invaluable.

Based on the findings, the Cornell Lab has noted many exotic species showing up, especially in the southern portions of the United States. Some are establishing breeding populations that will ultimately have an effect on native bird populations. The most infamous intruders in the past, now seen widely across the country, are House Sparrows, European Starlings, and Rock Pigeons. All were considered exotic a century ago. The Rock Pigeon was first introduced by colonists in the early 17th century. The House Sparrow arrived in the 1850s, and the European Starling showed up in the 1890s. Immigrants wishing to bring a bit of home with them were responsible for these introductions. Other exotics seen are Chukar, Ring-necked Pheasant, and Gray Partridge.

The most notable introduced species currently moving across the United States is the Eurasian Collared-Dove, native to the Indian subcontinent. It was released in the Bahamas in the mid-1970s and before long spread around the islands and dispersed to Florida in the 1980s. The doves established footholds across the Southeast and may be coming to your neighborhood soon.

Most of the exotic finches and parrots you might see are descendents of escaped or unwanted pets. Most recently made famous

by a book and then a movie is the gang of Telegraph Hill parrots in San Francisco. Elsewhere, flocks of Monk Parakeets, natives of South America, can be found in areas as different as Florida and Chicago, as well as in Connecticut. Who would have believed they were so hardy?

We can now expect all sorts of members of the animal kingdom and insect kingdom to be moving along with humans. For example, ferrets are not native to California. Trying to learn from Florida, which has become a haven for many species, our state attempts to restrict any introduction of non-native species. However, many ferrets,

western North America until a few individuals were released in New York City. The finches adapted well and quickly spread to become one of the species most reported by FeederWatchers across North America. Another species, the White-winged Dove, originally native to states along the Mexican border, is becoming more and more common in Florida and the Gulf Coast states and even north into the Great Plains. Such expansion of range is limitless as long as the basic needs of the birds are met.

The impact of non-natives such as Starlings and House Sparrows upon some of our favorite birds, such as bluebirds, Acorn



Black-headed Grosbeak.

which are entertaining creatures, are kept illegally as pets. Some have escaped and may endanger native weasels. Obviously, the same occurs with all sorts of exotic pets, such as reptiles, fish, and insects.

Throughout history, native species have often broadened their territories, or their stomping grounds have become restricted due to disappearing habitat or lack of food sources. Therefore, no species is limited to a specific area unless its needs are extremely specific. One example is the House Finch. The home territory of the House Finch was

Woodpeckers, and some swallows, makes it important to track the spread of these intruders. Populations of native cavity nesters are quickly impacted by the competition for nesting sites. This is where we backyard birders can be helpful and useful. It's not easy to predict where non-natives will show up, but we can have an "aha!" moment or two when an outsider appears. Report any new sightings at your feeders to the Cornell Lab (go to www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/ to sign up), and be proud to have had a part in tracking invaders.

GGA Plans Far Afield Field Trips

Golden Gate Audubon is taking off on new adventures. The Field Trips Committee (Susan Groves, Chair, Bob Lewis, Ruth Tobey) has partnered with tour operators to provide GGA members exciting new birding opportunities.

From July 29 to August 4, Nestling Tours will lead a family trip to Southeast Arizona. This is prime time to see hummingbirds, trogons, Spotted Owls, and other species in a highly productive birding area. Two outdoor instructors will provide educational and recreational activities for children. The trip will be led by Norm Lewis, president of the Colorado Field Ornithologists, who has guided numerous professional birding trips to Southeast Arizona. The trip is designed for families with children from first to sixth grade, with opportunities for older children and all family members to enjoy the outdoors and birding. GGA Supporting Members receive a 5 percent discount.

In January 2007, Nature Treks and Passages will offer a nine-day birding and cultural trip to Copper Canyon in Mexico. The itinerary is designed to appeal to all levels of birders, from beginners to advanced. Birds of the area include Eared Quetzal, White-fronted Parrot, Rufous-bellied Chachalaca, Russet-crowned Motmot and many more. In addition to birding, the group will visit ancient petroglyphs, ride the spectacular Copper Canyon train, encounter the Tarahumara Indian culture and visit lovely Colonial towns.

For more information, visit www.goldengateaudubon.org or contact Ruth Tobey at ruthsobey@earthlink.net. GGA intends to organize more "big trips" every year. To receive email notices of these trip opportunities, contact Ruth Tobey.



Copper Canyon, Mexico

BIRD FLU

Moreover, the vast majority of the 200 or so reported human infections of H5N1 have occurred as a result of humans living in very close proximity to domestic poultry or working in environments with high concentrations of infected poultry. (i.e. farms and live-bird markets.)

To help protect yourself against becoming infected by the H5N1 virus, take the following precautions:

- Wash your hands often, for at least 20 seconds with soap. This virus can live for days on hard surfaces and in water and soil.
- If you're sick, stay home. A person can transmit an influenza virus for 1-2 days before feeling symptoms and as many as 7 days after feeling better.
- When cooking meat, follow good hygienic practices. Cook thoroughly.
- Songbirds are unlikely to carry the virus, but can carry salmonellosis, avian pox and fungal infections. Clean feeders often and disinfect with bleach or vinegar at least once a month.

For additional information, visit our website, www.goldengateaudubon.org.

by **Samantha Murray, Conservation Director**

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Thank you for your generous donations to support our many conservation, education, and member activities!

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Cats Indoors: National Fish & Wildlife Foundation

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THE BIRDS OF ALCATRAZ from page 1

their young on the island, and Man's Hummingbirds have nested in the past and may yet again. There is also unconfirmed evidence that a Burrowing Owl pair has set up house.

For much of Alcatraz's history, however, birds were infrequent visitors, much less residents. The island was first named "La Isla de los Alcatrazes" by Spanish explorer Juan Manuel de Ayala in 1775. Although the name translates as "Island of the Pelicans," whether it was actually pelicans that Ayala saw on the mostly barren rock remains uncertain. "Alcatraz" is from the Arabic for "bucket," a word that served as a catchall term for any seabird with a pouch. Since no pelicans live on Alcatraz now, experts wonder if they ever lived there.

Whatever seabirds originally nested on Alcatraz, they brought a meager sustenance to the island. With no source of fresh water, only a thin layer of grass fed by rain and fog managed to grow on the rock, and it may have been only enough to support gulls and cormorants.

The arrival of the U.S. military in 1850

changed that. With so little usable soil available, the military had to ship its own soil from the mainland in order to construct what became the strongest U.S. fort west of the Mississippi.

Despite the creation of what should have been a more hospitable environment for a wider variety of species, birds did not do well during the first century-plus of human occupation of Alcatraz. To the military (and the Bureau of Prisons officials who followed) the birds were nuisances to be driven off and kept off — even to the point of guards using them for target practice during the infamous prison years.

Once the jailbirds departed the island in 1963, real birds began to make their way back, but with an important difference. The century of human habitation had completely changed Alcatraz's environment. The birds could now take advantage of the trees, shrubs and gardens planted by the prison wardens and their families. According to Christian Hellwig, the birds likely chose Alcatraz as a safer nesting ground over nearby Angel Island because of the lack of predators on Alcatraz, which is due, in turn,

to the scant amount of fresh water.

Bird life on Alcatraz has further improved since 1973 when the island became part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA), managed by the National Park Service. Since the mid-1990s, PRBO Conservation Science and the U.S. Geological Services (USGS) Biology Resources have been studying impacts on the island's bird populations due to its proximity to a major urban area.

Recently, Golden Gate Audubon was invited by the Park Service and PRBO to provide input and assistance for a bird conservation and management strategy. As part of this program, Golden Gate Audubon launched its series of monthly, members-only bird walks, through July, that focus on the natural history of the island. If the tours create enough interest among the Bay Area's enthusiastic population of birders, they may be continued as a regular feature.

More details about these fascinating walks are described in Field Trips on page 6, and at www.goldengateaudubon.org. It's a great trip, well worth taking!

by Thomas Burchfield

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