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VOL. 93 NO. 9 DECEMBER 2008

THE GULL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Eddie Bartley

A Green Heron was one of the nighttime building collision victims discovered by GGA volunteers.

GGA Volunteers Document Night Flyer Collisions

A Green Heron, Swainson's Thrush, Black-throated Gray Warbler, and several sparrow species—apparent victims of night-time collisions with tall, lighted buildings—were found dead on the sidewalks of downtown San Francisco this fall. The birds were discovered by Golden Gate Audubon volunteers, who surveyed downtown streets in the early morning hours from September through mid-October. The five volunteers are the front-line corps in Lights Out for Birds, a project initiated by Golden Gate Audubon to help migrating birds travel more safely through the city at night. Their job: to provide evidence that birds do collide with the city's tall, lighted structures at night.

"When the project started, we weren't sure what we would find," says GGA's Noreen Weeden and head of the Lights Out project, "but data from the volunteers and also from San Francisco's Animal Care and Control proved that migrating birds are, in fact, colliding with tall buildings at night."

Weeden said it's likely the volunteer monitoring team would have found more dead birds if they had been on the streets before building maintenance employees began power-washing and sweeping the sidewalks at 6 a.m. "Next spring, we hope volunteers will be able to survey earlier, between 4 and 5:45 a.m., or after 11 p.m."

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Grant Helps GGA Expand Programs

Golden Gate Audubon has a long-standing commitment to engage new communities in conservation, driven by the need to broaden the conservation movement and to involve local residents in protecting and enjoying their local resources. Now, with the help of grants from TogetherGreen,—a new National Audubon program funded by Toyota—we will expand our work with new communities dramatically. And we are eager for our members to get involved.

TogetherGreen aims to inspire people everywhere to take action at home, in their communities and beyond to improve the health of our environment. Golden Gate Audubon was honored to receive a \$65,000 grant for our Wetlands and Wildlands campaign—one of the largest Innovation Grants awarded this year. The grant will enable us to engage two communities that are in close proximity to sites where we focus some of our most critical shoreline conservation work: North Richmond and Bayview/Hunters Point. Hundreds of local residents will have a chance to help protect wildlife and wetlands along the San Francisco Bay shorelines adjoining their communities and to participate in community bird walks, classes and field trips. We will also be providing more opportunities to the local communities to restore habitat at San Francisco's Pier 94 and to help protect habitat along the North Richmond Shoreline. To accom-

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The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 25, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Supporting Membership is \$25 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. The board of directors meets six times per year (schedule can be obtained from the main office).

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Severe Bird Declines Point to Need for Local Action

The past several months have brought some very distressing news for bird lovers, conservationists, and everyone else who relies on healthy ecosystems for survival: hundreds of common bird species around the world are in decline. Recent reports from Audubon and BirdLife International indicate that common birds—from songbirds to shorebirds to waterfowl—are disappearing drastically, with some species' populations falling by as much as 90 percent over the past 40 years.

Local birds in decline include many once-common birds, sightings of which have become increasingly rare throughout the Bay Area. Migratory species such as the Wilson's Phalarope, Semi-palmated Sandpiper, and Lesser Yellowlegs are all decreasing throughout their range, and they are becoming harder to spot at some of our primary shoreline habitats. Others, such as the Northern Pintail, Loggerhead Shrike, Lark Sparrow, and Horned Lark, are becoming more rare at former haunts. Scientists believe some of these species have declined worldwide by as much as 75 to 95 percent.

Evidence of the alarming decline in common birds is apparent around the globe. According to BirdLife International, birds migrating from Africa to Europe have suffered 40 percent population declines over three decades; over half of Latin American neotropical migrants monitored at U.S. breeding grounds have declined over the past 40 years; and African birds of prey have suffered dramatic population losses, some as high as 98 percent. In Asia, the White-rumped Vulture, which once numbered in the tens of millions, has plummeted by 99.9 percent since 1992 and now verges on extinction.

Scientists point to habitat loss as the primary cause of global bird declines. But other threats also play a role: invasive plant species that transform native habitats, impacts from pesticides and other chemicals, habitat changes resulting from climate change, and human developments that pose new threats to migrating birds, such as wind turbines located near important flyways and lighted buildings that attract birds at night and cause fatal collisions.

The global scale of bird loss is staggering, and it is yet more alarming because so many of these birds are common, birds have not been awarded the greater legal protections that accompany endangered or threatened species status.

But how can we respond meaningfully to a global crisis? The answer is complex, and reversing species loss will require action at all levels. We need legislative leadership at national, international, and regional levels to combat threats to birds. We need enforcement of existing environmental laws. And we need visionary conservation planning to address extensive habitat loss and impacts from our changing climate.

Of equal importance, we need local conservation action—from population monitoring to habitat restoration to advocacy and education. This is the heart of what we do at Golden Gate Audubon. As we restore and protect habitats at Martin Luther King, Jr. Shoreline, Eastshore State Park, the North Richmond Shoreline, and the southern waterfront of San Francisco, we are reversing the loss of 90 percent of the Bay's historic wetlands. As we monitor Western Snowy Plovers, create habitat for California Quail, push to create the Alameda National Wildlife Refuge, and lead the effort to create a plan to reduce raptor kills at the Altamont Pass wind farm, we are combating avian declines.

You have recently received a mailing from us asking for your support. Even in these difficult economic times, I hope that you can help us further our critically important mission. Our work is more relevant than ever, and we need your help—as volunteers, as members, and as contributors to support our programs. The conservation challenges we face today are immense, but Golden Gate Audubon is responding on the ground—one bird, one acre at a time.

—Elizabeth Murdock



CONSERVATION CORNER

A BRIDGE TO HARDING

As always, GGA's conservation committees watch for threats to local resources, especially threats to bird habitats. We have actively worked to preserve Lake Merced since 1919. Our most recent successful effort is participating in a group of stakeholders who have helped develop an ongoing Watershed Master Planning process.

The PGA President's Cup Golf Tournament will be held at Harding Golf Course from October 6-11, 2009. The PGA would like to widen the wood footbridge between the Sunset Circle and Harding Golf Course from 6 feet to 12 feet to accommodate busloads of spectators who will be dropped at the Circle. Not only will the bridge create a bottleneck of people—the connecting path is only 8 feet wide—but it seems

to stop this project, if it appears that it will cause harm to some of San Francisco's most valuable natural resources. If you haven't already signed up, please join our conservation alert e-mail list. You can do so by joining our Yahoo Group at ggasconservation@yahoo.com. We don't use this list frequently, but for urgent issues, it is a valuable communication resource.

—Dan Murphy

THE FUTURE OF SAN FRANCISCO'S OPEN SPACE

San Francisco has assembled an Open Space Planning Team. Between now and February 2009, they are soliciting comments from the community on the future of Open Space in the city. On October 15, 2008, the Neighborhood Parks Council hosted a discussion featuring speakers representing new ideas on urban parks, the Mayor's Office, and the Planning Department. New urban open space includes projects by the Green Schoolyard Alliance, Graze the Roof, Sunday Streets, and Interplay Design. The Green Schoolyard Alliance is working at schools to remove asphalt or install raised beds for gardens with funding from Prop A. Graze the Roof has installed a rooftop garden and educational mural at the Tenderloin's Glide Church. Sunday Streets raised funds to support closing streets from Chinatown to the Bayview for recreation. Astrid Haryati from the mayor's office spoke about working with city agencies to promote opportunities for more green roofs, and green corridors and stormwater catchment. A primary goal is for San Franciscans to have meaningful open space within a 10-minute walk from home. Sarah Dennis from the Planning Department discussed the San Francisco General Plan Open Space Element, which has not been updated for 25 years. The new plan will be a vision for the next 100 years. Housing and other development demands are increasing while places for the public to enjoy nature, and habitat for wildlife are being challenged. Golden Gate Audubon's San Francisco Conservation Committee will be reviewing the Open

Space Element and will provide comments on programs, new open space, partnerships, and priorities. If you are interested in participating, please contact Noreen Weeden at nwweden@comcast.net.

—Noreen Weeden

EAST BAY MARSH ENDANGERED

As you drive south through Richmond along Interstate 580, you can't miss Hoffman Marsh, a strip of tidal wetlands to your right. Even at highway speeds, it's easy to see large birds such as egrets and herons feeding in the shallows. A closer look might reveal rails and Song Sparrows, among many other species. The marsh extends south to Central Avenue, home of Richmond's Costco store; just a hundred yards farther south and you reach the Albany mudflats, one of the most important shorebird areas in the East Bay.

Unfortunately, major changes may soon harm the marsh and the mudflats: a department store and restaurant are being planned for a sparsely used industrial space immediately adjacent to the marsh, and the entire area is slated for re-zoning that would bring more "regional retail" to the area. Hundreds or thousands of additional car visits will bring motor oil and coolant that will wash into the marsh; litter will enter the marsh and the Bay, harming or killing birds and other animals; acres of lighted parking will interfere with birds' sleeping and feeding patterns; and rats, cats, and other predators attracted by restaurant trash will prey on birds and eggs. The severity of these impacts can't be judged from the available information, but the City of Richmond has made a preliminary determination that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is not necessary. Golden Gate Audubon disagrees: an EIR is necessary because environmental impacts may be substantial. Golden Gate Audubon is working to convince the City of Richmond to do an EIR; please contact East Bay Conservation Committee chair Phil Price, pnprice@creekcats.com, to help.

—Phil Price



Bob Lewis

White-crowned Sparrow

unlikely that work could be done before the start of nesting season, so construction would impact the habitat of wintering birds including Sora, Virginia Rail, and a host of other birds that depend on these wetlands during the winter. Spring or summer work would be likely to impact nesting Green Heron, Mallard, Ruddy Duck, Coot, Marsh Wren, Common Yellowthroat (a listed species), Song Sparrow, and perhaps others like Bushtit, Scrub Jay, White-crowned Sparrow, and other species that may be nesting in the nearby willows.

Golden Gate Audubon is currently monitoring this issue. We want our members to be aware of the issue so that you can submit comments in support of a future effort



The Speaker Series program has seen many enthusiastic speakers and devoted participants over the years, with crowds ranging from 10 to 80 people at each event. Thanks to all who participate in this monthly series. In 2009, the Speaker Series program will run one event per month, visiting each side of the Bay every other month. With this change, we are able to offer the program from January to November. The Berkeley series will continue at Northbrae Community Church, while the San Francisco series will change locations. We will keep you updated on programs and locations.

This past year, we have found some wonderful volunteers who help make the Speaker Series program a success. We thank them for all of their generosity and the time they put forth to make sure things run smoothly. We welcome you to come meet them in person.

Karen Frederiksen: Future Speaker Series Coordinator

A lifelong Berkeley native, Karen Frederiksen has seen many changes in the local environment. She is interested in preserving the Bay shoreline and protecting the natural habitat that makes our Bay Area unique. One of her earliest memories is helping her mother stuff envelopes for Save the Bay (thankfully, a successful endeavor). Karen has a degree in history from the University of California, Berkeley, and is active in several volunteer organizations that focus on community outreach and preservation of California history.



Della Dash: Merchandise Coordinator

Della Dash started her career as a nurse in San Francisco in the 1980s. After traveling to West Africa in 1988 where she began birding, she returned to the U.S. to complete her master's degree in international health at Johns Hopkins University. Eventually she moved to Berkeley and quickly took up the task of learning the local birds. She joined Golden Gate Raptor Observatory, and then Golden Gate Audubon, taking birding courses from local experts. She also began volunteering for GGA, and has been involved in the annual Christmas Bird Count, Speaker Series, East Bay Conservation Committee, field trips, and marketing of GGA programs. Della works as a nurse with severely emotionally disturbed teens and adults in Oakland, Berkeley, and Richmond.

Jane Anfinson: San Francisco Hospitality Coordinator

A trip to Florida got Jane Anfinson hooked on bird watching, and since then she has birded in many states, Mexico, and several Asian and Middle Eastern countries. She moved to San Francisco in 2007 from Arkansas, where she completed a master's degree in biology. Her thesis research focused on the possible causes of songbird abnormalities. Jane now works for the U.S. Geological Survey San Francisco Bay Estuary Field Station in Vallejo. In addition to volunteering for the GGA Speaker Series, she has recently begun to volunteer for San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, where she hopes to become a bird bander.



Nicole Kite: Berkeley Hospitality Coordinator

Nicole is a student of landscape architecture and environmental planning at the University of California, Berkeley. Originally from southern California, she is now in her third year of undergraduate study with plans to graduate in the spring of 2010. In addition to landscape design, Nicole studies art, architecture, and city planning and in her free time enjoys drawing and painting, as well as spending time outdoors.

—Jennifer Robinson

NIGHTFLYERS from page 1

she said.

In September, the San Francisco Department of the Environment and the American Bird Conservancy joined Golden Gate Audubon in an effort to expand the Lights Out project by encouraging downtown building owners to turn off unnecessary lights at night and by pinpointing 44 of the city's tallest buildings as potential Lights Out sites. The Lights Out team met with representatives of the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA), Animal Care and Control, San Francisco Zoological Society, San Francisco Citizens for Smart Lighting, and WildCare, all of whom agreed to cooperate. PG&E also agreed to



Swainson's Thrush

Tom Grey

work with the building managers on energy saving measures that can prevent bird-building collisions.

In spring 2009, Golden Gate Audubon will lead a targeted outreach program to building owners, managers, and tenants on steps they can take to save natural resources, energy, and money by reducing night-time lighting on their buildings.

"This will go far toward meeting our goal of making migrating birds' Pacific Flyway travels a bit safer through San Francisco," Weeden says.

Other cities around the United States have begun similar programs. Chicago's Bird Collision Monitoring Program's Annette Prince says their program started with four volunteers in 2002; currently they have 80 volunteers who start an hour before sunrise to check a one-square mile area each day during migration season. The Chicago program has documented 120 species of birds as victims of building collisions. It has also developed an "honor roll" of buildings that participate by turning their lights off at night during migration.

—Marjorie Blackwell

Make Your 2009 Travel Plans with Golden Gate Audubon

Next year, Golden Gate Audubon is offering four "Big Trips" outside the Bay Area. For applications and detailed information on all of these trips, please contact Ruth Tobey, 510.528.2093 or ruth-tobey@gmail.com.

WINTER AND SPRING IN OREGON

Harry Fuller, a popular Golden Gate Audubon field trip leader who recently moved from San Francisco to Ashland, Oregon, will lead two extended trips. If you do not know Harry or did not hear his recent lecture at the Oakland Museum of California, you can experience the flavor of his extensive knowledge and enthusiasm for birds on his blog at <http://atowhee.wordpress.com>.

Harry's first trip, January 23–25, will begin at the Klamath Basin, where we expect to see Bald Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, Prairie Falcon, and wintering waterfowl, including Tundra Swan. The second day will focus on the Rogue Valley, which should yield an abundance of ducks, including Barrow's Goldeneye, possibly both shrikes, Prairie Falcon, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Short-eared Owl, and Lincoln's Sparrow. Day three will take us to Emigrant Lake near Ashland to look for a variety of ducks, both eagle species, Lewis's Woodpecker, Mountain Chickadee, Mountain Bluebird, and American Dipper.

One evening Harry will present a short, richly illustrated lecture on the history of birding in California and Oregon with lots of slides, or we may have a speaker from the Klamath Bird Observatory (www.klamath-bird.org).

The second trip will be on Memorial Day weekend, May 22–25, in the middle of high season for high-elevation birds. Among the many target species are Northern Goshawk, Gray Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Mountain Bluebird, White-headed Woodpecker, Townsend's Solitaire, Green-tailed Towhee, MacGillivray's Warbler, Mountain Chickadee, Black-capped Chickadee, Rufous Hummingbird, Hermit Warbler, Cassin's Finch, Great Gray Owl, American

Dipper, Common Poorwill, Vaux's Swift, and possibly Yellow Rail in the upper Klamath Basin. An optional extension on May 26 is available for seeking out Black Swift at Salt Creek Falls in Oregon or Burney Falls in California. **Only one space is left in Harry's May trip.**

Each Oregon trip is limited to 10 participants, and each trip requires a \$100 deposit to reserve your space. Cost of each trip has not yet been determined but will include lodging and ground transportation. Part of the cost will be a \$50 tax-deductible donation to Golden Gate Audubon.



Tom Grey

Mountain Bluebird

THE BIRDS OF BELIZE AND BRAZIL

Mark Pretti, an enthusiastic all-around naturalist, will lead trips to Belize and Brazil. Knowledgeable about birds, flowers, trees, and butterflies, he has a special gift for sharing his extensive interest in flora and

fauna. His excellent organizational skills will ensure a smoothly functioning trip.

Mark's Belize trips scheduled for February 11–21 and February 21–March 3 are already full. There are **three spaces left in the Brazil trip** scheduled for July 11–25.

The trip to Brazil centers on Mato Grosso, the Pantanal, and the southern Amazon. Brazil is renowned for its largely undisturbed tropical forests, abundance of rivers and wetlands, tremendous diversity of flora and fauna, and outstanding birding and wildlife viewing. Mato Grosso, Brazil, is one of the world's finest natural destinations. We'll experience one of nature's greatest spectacles as we explore a roughly 500-mile-long, north-south transect and travel through some of the earth's richest habitats with more than 200 species of mammals and almost 750 species of birds. We'll also enjoy the comforts of four of Brazil's best nature lodges. In the past few years, Mark has lived in this area of Brazil, exploring its diverse habitats, learning about its amazing biodiversity, and guiding dozens of nature enthusiasts.

Cost is \$4,450 per person based on double occupancy (subject to modest adjustment if 2009 hotel/transport costs increase) and includes all lodging, meals, guides, and transportation from Cuiaba, Mato Grosso. Part of the cost is a \$150 donation to Golden Gate Audubon. A deposit of \$300 per person is required to secure your place on each Brazil trip.

Good News! Charitable IRA Rollover Gifts Re-Authorized

Congress has re-authorized legislation that allows individuals 70-1/2 years or older to make cash gifts totaling up to \$100,000 per year from traditional or Roth IRAs to qualified charities without incurring income tax on the withdrawal. The current provision is for tax years 2008 and 2009 only. For the 2008 tax year, you must act by December 31st to take full advantage of the current legislation. Gifts from your IRA can be used to satisfy your Minimum Required Distribution (MRD). While you cannot claim a charitable deduction for IRA gifts, you will not pay income tax on the amount. Please note that transfers must be made directly to the charity by the plan trustee. To learn more please contact Linda Coffee, Development Manager at 510.843.7295.



FIELD TRIPS

PAM BELCHAMBER, COORDINATOR

\$ Entrance fee

 Biking trip

For questions about individual field trips, contact the leaders. If you cannot reach a leader, contact Pam Belchamber at 510.549.2839. Field trips are also listed on the Golden Gate Audubon website at www.goldengateaudubon.org.

Jewel Lake in Tilden

berkeley

Friday, December 5

8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Phila Rogers, 510.848.9156,
philajane6@yahoo.com

The first Friday of the month Jewell Lake walk will meet at the parking lot at the north end of Central Park Dr. for a one-mile, two-hour-plus stroll through this lush riparian area. Water birds should have returned to the lake. Be prepared for mud. Heavy rain cancels.

Birding for Everyone

San Francisco Botanical Garden at
Strybing Arboretum

Saturday, December 6

10 a.m. – noon

Angie Geiger and Nancy DeStefanis, SF
Nature Education, Darin Dawson, S.F.
Botanical Garden Docent, 415.387.9160;
www.sfnature.org

Meet for this monthly trip at the kiosk/
bookstore at front gate of Botanical
Garden, Ninth Avenue at Lincoln Way.
Families welcome. Children must be
accompanied by an adult. Co-sponsored
by Botanical Garden, San Francisco Nature
Education, and GGA.

San Francisco Botanical Gardens

Golden Gate Park, San Francisco

Sunday, December 7

8 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Alan Ridley, allanrid@pacbell.net;
Helen McKenna, 415.566.3241;
Ginny Marshall, 650.349.3780

Meet at 8 a.m. at the front gate of the
Botanical Garden at Ninth Avenue at Lin-
coln Way. This delightful section of Golden
Gate Park has several micro-habitats that
attract an array of resident, migrant, and
vagrant birds. This regular monthly trip is
oriented toward beginning birders.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Shoreline

Arrowhead Marsh, Oakland

Friday, December 12

8:30 a.m. – noon

Bob Lewis, bob@wingbeats.org

Join Bob Lewis on the on 2nd Friday in
December at Arrowhead Marsh at the
MLK Shoreline, noted for Clapper Rails
and a number of other skulking species.
On this particular day, the tide will be very
high, and conditions should be super for
spotting rails. Take Hwy 880 towards the
Oakland Airport. Exit at Hegenberger
Road, going West. Turn right on Doolittle,
and left on Swan Way. Turn left into the

MLK Shoreline Regional Park, and con-
tinue to the end of the road. Meet at the
last parking lot at 8:30 a.m.

Corona Heights

San Francisco

Friday, December 19

8 a.m. – 10 a.m.

Charles Hibbard; Dominik Mosur;
Brian Fitch; Margaret Goodale,
mgoodale@randallmuseum.org,
415.554.9600 x16 .

Meet in front of Randall Museum, 199
Museum Way, at end of Museum Way
off Roosevelt. We will enjoy views of the
city and bay as we circle Corona Heights,
checking east canyon woodland and
north forest for residents and migrants,
as well as monitoring hilltop scrub and
south cliff.

Bicycle Trip

Kathy Jarrett

510.547.1233 (call for cell number; no calls after 9 p.m.), Kathy_Jarrett@yahoo.com
Bicycle helmet required. Bring lunch and liquids. Dress in layers. Rain cancels.

BART schedules: www.transitinfo.org

East Bay Regional Parks

Arrowhead Marsh/Martin Luther King Jr.

Oakland, Alameda County

Saturday, January 10

Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233,
kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com

Bicycle from Fruitvale BART at 9:30, meet at East Creek Point Trailhead 9:50. We'll
ride the S.F. Bay Trail from East Creek Point to Damon Marsh and Arrowhead Marsh.
Bring snacks/lunch and liquids, and dress in layers. Bicycle helmet required. All lev-
els of birders and bicyclists welcome. Heavy rain cancels.

Leaders will ride from Fruitvale BART to the trailhead. No reservations necessary
but email or phone call appreciated. Allow time to get your BART ticket processed
and your bicycle to the platform.

Directions by 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. Lesser St. is just beyond on the left.

Note: High tide on Sunday January 11 is at 11:31 am. To reach Arrowhead Marsh by car: From I-880 in
Oakland, exit at Hegenberger Road and head west. Turn right onto Doolittle Drive (Hwy. 61) and right
again onto Swan Way, then first left into the park (look for small EBRPD sign on left); continue to end of
drive to parking lot.

Info and maps online: BART schedules <http://www.transitinfo.org> ; East Bay Regional Park District <http://www.ebparcs.org/>; Tide info: <http://www.saltwatertides.com/cgi-local/california.cgi>



Lincoln's Sparrow

Tom Grey

Volunteer Opportunities and Events

Join a conservation committee to get involved in conserving birds and habitat. The East Bay Conservation Committee meets on the first Tuesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. in different locations. The San Francisco Conservation Committee meets the first Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. at the Randall Museum.

Saturday, December 6, 9 a.m. to noon: Planting the Presidio's Nike (Missile) Swale

The remnant dune-oak woodland-wetland site known as Presidio Hills (behind the Presidio's old Public Health Services Hospital) is undergoing some remarkable changes. If you've ever birded this area or volunteered during the last decade on a Presidio Quail habitat restoration program you may remember an enormous slope of iceplant (with views of Mt. Sutro in the distance) below a fenced maintenance yard. In August the iceplant was removed mechanically to allow for environmental remediation of portions of the site. What awaits is an acre of sunny south facing dunes eager for a broad palette of wildflowers, shrubs, and trees to enhance an already rich wildlife area. RSVP by calling Jenny McIlvaine at 415.561.5333.

Armchair Bird Watching

What kinds of birds can you see from your window? Bird lovers who cannot easily leave their homes are among the participants in Senior Center Without Walls. This unique program offers activities, friendly conversation, and an assortment of classes and support groups to elders throughout Northern California who find it difficult to go to a community senior center. SCWW is seeking a volunteer for the spring session (February 2 through April 25) who would like to have a weekly telephone conversation about birds with a group of seniors. If you would like more information, please check out our website at www.seniorcenterwithoutwalls.org, or call Terry Englehart at 1.877.797.7299 or 510.444.5974.

For more information on any of these activities or events, or for directions to any of the sites, please contact Jennifer Robinson, Golden Gate Audubon's Volunteer Coordinator, at jrobinson@goldengate-audubon.org.

Christmas Bird Counts and Dinners

If you missed the deadline* to participate in one of our two Christmas Bird Counts—in Oakland on Sunday, December 14, and San Francisco on Tuesday, December 30—you can still sign up for the dinners afterwards via our website, www.goldengateaudubon.org. For additional information, contact Dave Quady at 510.704.9353 or Bob Lewis at 510.845.5001 (Oakland CBC), or Dan Murphy at 415.564.0074 (San Francisco CBC). For information on the dinner after either count, contact the GGA office at 510.843.2222.

*Deadline for Oakland count: Nov. 23; deadline for SF Count: Dec. 8

Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park

Wednesday, December 24
9:30 a.m. – noon

Hilary Powers, 510.834.1066,
hilary@powersedit.com; Ruth Tobey,
510.528.2093, ruthtobey@earthlink.net

Join us on Christmas Eve day at the large spherical cage near the Nature Center at Perkins and Bellevue. We will bird around there, then go up the garden path toward Children's Fairyland or walk down the lake toward Embarcadero, after which we will cover what we missed. The returning migrants should be out in force this month, with Barrow's Goldeneyes, with luck, and most of the rest of the diving ducks. The park is in the peak of the winter season, and migrants should have arrived and not yet left. Come see Lake Merritt at its best. Take 12, N, or NL bus to Grand and Perkins, and walk into park on Perkins. Best parking at boathouse lot near spherical cage. Entry (via Bellevue near Children's Fairyland) is free on weekdays.

Wildlife Refuges of the Sacramento Valley

Sutter, Butte, and Glenn Counties

Saturday and Sunday
December 13 – 14

This weekend field trip is to several refuges in the northern Sacramento Valley. See October/November Gull and website for details or contact Terry Colborn at tlcgdc@aol.com or 530.758.0689.

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plish this, we are recruiting local volunteer bird walk leaders and teachers.

Another small grant from the Together-Green Volunteer Days program will help Golden Gate Audubon expand outreach efforts to engage volunteers at the Alameda Wildlife Refuge. An Important Bird Area, the refuge is home to Northern California's most important colony of endangered California Least Terns and the Bay Area's only night-roosting location for brown pelicans.

—Jennifer Robinson

HOW YOU CAN HELP

For the Wetlands and Wildlands program, we are seeking Bayview/Hunters Point, Richmond and San Pablo residents (or people familiar with the North Richmond Shoreline or San Francisco southern waterfront), who are interested in leading bird walks or classes. For the Alameda program, simply join us for monthly workdays (second Sunday of the month, September to March) at the Alameda Wildlife Refuge. Contact Jennifer Robinson at jrobinson@goldengate-audubon.org to get involved.



CLASSES

Classes at Albany Adult School

This winter, Golden Gate Audubon is sponsoring three classes at Albany Adult School. Register online at www.albany.k12.ca.us/adult/birding.html (classes are in the Audubon/Nature Studies category) or by calling 510.559.6580.

Birds of the Bay Area

Rusty Scalf and Bob Lewis

Four Wednesday night classes, January 7 – 28, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

Three field trips on Saturday or Sunday following classes, and a fourth weekend-long trip January 31 – February 1.

With ducks, geese, and swans flocking to the Central Valley, and raptors and shorebirds everywhere, winter is a special season in Northern California. Join an enthusiastic group of birders and learn to identify birds of the Bay Area. For more information go to www.wingbeats.org.

Birds & Butterflies—Easy Garden Enchantment

Corinne Greenberg

Four Tuesday lectures, Jan. 13 – Feb. 3, 7 – 9 p.m., and one field trip, Saturday morning, February 7.

Set out a welcome for birds, butterflies, and other beneficial critters. Be captivated by the beauty of native plants as you learn year-round ecological gardening. Gorgeous slide shows, environmental and natural history, and easy garden management lessons will help you create an enchanting wildlife habitat. Fabulous field trip. See www.thegardenisateacher.com for details. Materials fee is \$5, payable to instructor.

Birding By Ear—Winter Session

Denise Wight

Four Thursday evenings, February 26 – March 19, 7 – 8:30 p.m.
Four Saturday field trips, February 28 – March 21, 8:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Birds communicate by making a variety of sounds all year long, even in the middle of winter. This class will focus on bird sounds heard at this time of year in our area. We will learn to locate and identify birds by chips and calls as well as the songs of some species that are now starting to sing. For more information, email blkittiwake@yahoo.com.

Winter East Bay Class

Zen and the Art of Mushroom Hunting

Debbie Viess

One Thursday evening class, Feb. 12, 7:30 – 9 p.m. with one field trip, February 15, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.; location to be announced.

Discover the world of mushrooms with an experienced and



Red-necked Phalarope

Lee Karney

engaging guide. The workshop consists of an evening slide lecture, including hands-on material, and a day in the field at a premier mushrooming location.

Location: Golden Gate Audubon office, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G. Fee is \$35 fee. To register, call GGA at 510.843.2222.

Oakland Museum Class

North American Owls

Dave Quady

Oakland Museum of California

Three evening lectures February 17, 18, 24; 7 – 8:30 p.m., and three weekend evening field trips, dates to be determined.

Seldom seen but often heard, owls hold a fascination for most of us. Learn what makes an owl different from other birds, how to identify them by sight and sound, and understand more about their habits and habitats. Classes will be illustrated with slides, and with the sounds of these birds of the night. On field trips, we will attempt to hear and see some of the species we'll discuss.

\$75 fee. Sign-ups begin at noon on Monday, January 5. First come, first served. To register, call GGA at 510.843.2222.

Winter San Francisco Class

Wild Birds of San Francisco

Eddie Bartley

Two Thursday evening lectures, Jan 22 and 29; three Saturday field trips, January 17, 24, and 31.

Join a fun and enthusiastic group in an introduction to many of the amazing birds that inhabit the San Francisco Bay Area in winter, and discover their local habitats. Presentations include colorful bird imagery, information on optics and field guides, identification techniques, and more.

Location: San Francisco Botanical Garden's County Fair Building. The first meeting will be at the main entrance to the Botanical Garden at 9 a.m. on January 17. The fee is \$50. For information, contact eddie@naturetrip.com (www.naturetrip.com). To register, call GGA at 510.843.2222.



Fall migration is California's peak birding season and this year was no exception. This year was unusual for its influx of Siberian rarities.

LOONS TO DUCKS

Seawatchers from Pigeon Pt. on the SM coast observed a Flesh-footed Shearwater on the 11th and a high count of 287 Black-vented Shearwaters on the 24th (RTh).

RAPTORS TO ALCIDS

On Oct. 25, a juvenile Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) hawked dragonflies over Hawk Hill, MRN (SB). On the 11th, a juvenile Northern Goshawk crossed the Golden Gate and made landfall near the SF toll plaza (SB). Two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers led the Siberian invasion, first at Pt. Isabel, CC, on Oct. 11-12 (AK; JH) and then at Frank's Dump West, Hayward RS, ALA, on Oct. 13-16 (BoB, BaB, SH; mob).

DOVES TO THRASHERS

On Sep. 29, a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (*Empidonax flaviventris*) made a one-day stop-over at Junior Mendoza, PRNS, MRN (RS). Other vagrant flycatchers around the region included a Least, 2 Hammonds, and a Gray Flycatcher, plus an Eastern Phoebe. A Northern Shrike lingered 4 days beginning the 16th at Las Gallinas Water Treatment Plant in San Rafael, MRN (MSt; JLo, DA, JLu).

The Siberian rock star was a Dusky Warbler (*Phylloscopus fuscatus*) that showed up on Oct. 9 behind Costco in Richmond / El Cerrito, CC (ES; mob). This bird was one of 4 Dusky Warbler sightings in the state this year, a phenomenon not seen since 1997, when 4 sightings doubled the number of state records. The only prior mainland record for the Bay Area came from Hayward RS in ALA, Sep. 28-29 1984.

On the 14th, observers watched a Northern Harrier snag a Brown Thrasher at the PRNS Lighthouse, MRN. But another Brown Thrasher replaced it on the 25th (RS; SS, DvN, oob). Beginning Oct. 14, the Siberian Express brought 10 Red-throated Pipits



Mark Eaton

Red-throated Pipit

to the Presidio, SF (HC; mob); Gilroy, SCL (SR); outer PRNS, MRN (Rte, MB); and Moss Beach, SM (RTh). A much rarer find was an Asian Pipit (aka American Pipit, *japonicus* race), located at Radio Rd. in Redwood Shores, SM, on Oct. 27-29 (RTh).

WOOD WARBLERS TO FINCHES

October was warbler migration month, bringing Black-throated Blue and Prothonotary Warblers to the PRNS Fish Docks, MRN (RS; mob) through the 8th. A Worm-eating warbler (*Helminthos vermivorus*) visited a Potrero Hill backyard, SF, on the 19th, inspiring a letter to the SF Chronicle (AF). On the 9th, a Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*) hit a window at Peet's Coffee in Brentwood, CC, and was taken to the Lindsay Wildlife Museum for treatment (fide GB in the CC Times). On Sep. 30, a Mourning Warbler (*Oporornis philadelphia*) was ID'd at Campbell Cove in Bodega

Bay, SON (TC). The regional warbler tally included 10 Tennessee, 3 Virginia's, and 2 Lucy's Warblers; a Northern Parula; 5 Chestnut-sided, 6 Magnolia, 2 Cape May, 3 Blackburnian, 18 Palm, 12 Blackpoll, and 4 Black-and-white Warblers; 2 American Redstarts; 4 Northern Waterthrush; and a Canada Warbler.

Three American Tree Sparrows visited the region Oct. 12-16 at Nunes (A) Ranch, PRNS, MRN (CTL, JLe, MSk); Half Moon Bay, SM (RTh; mob); and Stinson Beach, MRN (RS). A Black-throated Sparrow in a Healdsburg backyard on Oct. 8-11 was just a 2nd SON record (DnN). Also on the 8th, a Lark Bunting made it to Coyote Pt., SM (RTh). An elusive Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow popped up at Arrowhead Marsh, ALA, on the 11th (SH).

A McCown's Longspur joined a flock of 75+ Lapland Longspurs between the Mendoza and Nunes Ranches, PRNS, on the 26th (RS, VB, BS). Elsewhere, Laplands were located at Crissy Field in the Presidio (DQ; mob); Abbott's Lagoon, PRNS (Rte, MB); and Cesar Chavez Park, ALA (BP). A Chestnut-collared Longspur flew over Battery Godfrey in the Presidio on the 24th (BF). A Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) joined the finches at a Dillon Beach, SON, feeder on the 19th (MP, DH). Three Bobolinks were discovered in a field near Coyote Pt., SM, on the 14th (RTh). On Oct. 20 and 21, Rusty Blackbirds were ID'd in Upper Lucas Valley, MRN (NS) and at the PRNS Lighthouse (RS).

See Birding Resources at www.goldengateaudubon.org for complete sightings data.

Semicolons separate original observer(s) from subsequent observer(s). Abbreviation "mob" = many observers, "oob" = other observers. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listservs, the author apologizes for any errors or omissions.

Abbreviations for Observers: AF, Arthur Feinstein; AK, Alan Krakauer, BaB, Barbara Brandriff, BF, Brian Fitch; BoB, Bob Brandriff, BP, Bob Power; BS, Bob Speckles, CTL, Cin-Ty Lee, DA, David Assmann; DH, Dave Hofmann, DnN, Dan Nelson, DQ, Dave Quady, DvN, David Nelson, ES, Emilie Strauss; GB, Gary Bogue, HC, Hugh Cotter, JC, Josiah Clark, JH, Jeff Hoppes, JLe, John Lewis, JLo, Jim Lomax, JLu, John Luther; MB, Matt Brady; ME, Mark Eaton, MP, Mike Parmeter, MSk, Mike Skram, MSt, Michael Stevenson, NS, Natalie Simi; RS, Rich Stallcup; Rte, Ryan Terrill; RTh, Ron Thorn, SB, Steven Bauer, SH, Steve Huckabone, SR, Steve Rottenborn, SS, Stan Snyder, TC, Terry Colborn, VB, Veronica Bowers

Abbreviations for Counties and Others: ALA, Alameda, CBRC, California Bird Records Committee; CC, Contra Costa, CCFS, Coyote Creek Field Station, CP, County Park, Cr., Creek, Cyn., Canyon, DENWR, Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge, EEC, Environmental Education Center, FOS, first of season, GGP, Golden Gate Park, L, Lake, MRN, Marin; Mt., Mount, N., North, NAP, Napa, NWR, National Wildlife Refuge; OSP, Open Space Preserve, PRBO, Pt Reyes Bird Observatory; PRNS, Pt Reyes National Seashore, Pt., Point, Rd., Road, Res., Reservoir, RP, Regional Park, RS, Regional Shoreline; S., South, SB, State Beach, SCL, Santa Clara, SF, San Francisco, SFBBO, SF Bay Bird Observatory, SM, San Mateo, SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma, SP, State Park, SR, State Reserve, WPCP, Water Pollution Control Plant

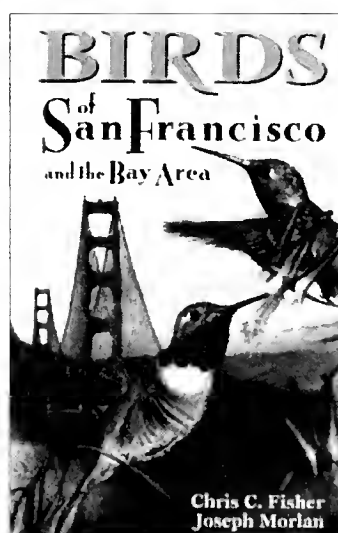
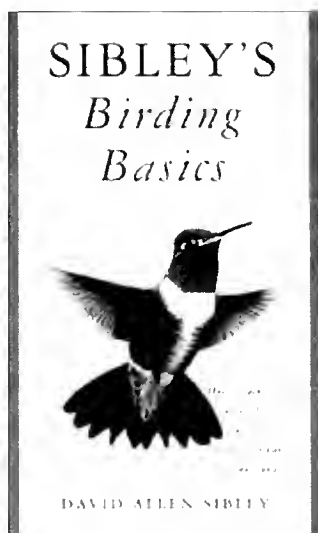
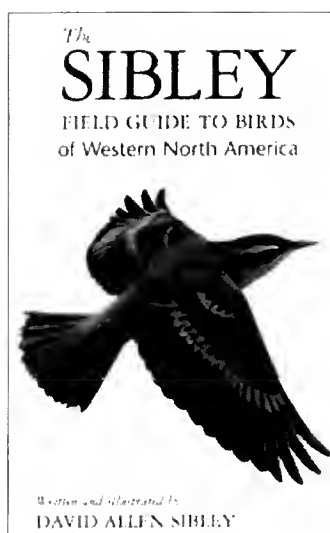
Holiday Gifts at the Nature Store

Golden Gate Audubon's Nature Store has something for every bird lover on your list. Our prices on seed and feeders are the best in both the East Bay and San Francisco, and both the styles and mixtures of these items are geared for local species such as goldfinches, chickadees, etc. Some of our best deals and hot sellers include:

- Thayer CD ROM Software - California Birds
- Peterson's Western Birding By Ear (Audio CD)
- Sibley's Birding Basics
- Sibley's Guide to Western Birds
- Birds of the San Francisco Bay Area
- A Guide to the Common Birds of Panama

Please stop by to browse during normal business hours.

—Kristen Bunting



End of the Big Year – A Celebration

Northbrae Community Church
941 The Alameda, Berkeley
January 13, 7–9 p.m.

During 2008, a group of birders canvassed both Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, in an effort to see how many species of birds could be found in each. The year is coming to an end, and on January 13, we'll have a slide show of some of the unusual birds seen during the year, together with stories from, and awards for, the folks who participated. The celebration is open to all—we'll provide cheese and crackers, cookies, coffee, and tea. Come and enjoy the good company of fellow birders.

—Bob Lewis



Bob Lewis

Birder Emilie Strauss found this Dusky Warbler—which breeds from Eastern Siberia to Mongolia and winters from India through Southeast Asia—behind the Richmond Costco store in October. There are only 10 previous records of this species in California.

A Message from Our Treasurer

Golden Gate Audubon owes its financial success—and its overall success—to the continued generosity of its members. This becomes clear when looking at the financial statements. For the years ended June 30, 2008 and 2007, GGA received \$193,445 and \$238,057, respectively, in gifts and donations and an additional \$103,437 and \$100,302, respectively, in membership dues. This public support not only funded member services and administration but also helped to underwrite conservation and education programs. Golden Gate Audubon could not sustain its programs and activities without your membership dues, volunteer efforts, and generosity. In addition, the organization received \$259,057 and \$220,122, respectively, in grants. We are most grateful for the continuing support of charitable foundations and organizations and their recognition of the important work we are doing in the San Francisco Bay Area.

For the year ended June 30, 2008, Golden Gate Audubon's net assets decreased \$119,058, largely due to net realized and unrealized investment losses of \$72,100.

Golden Gate Audubon has accumulated \$829,000 in net assets since its inception 91 years ago, of which \$110,767 is restricted for future program services. We follow good budgeting practices to sustain important ongoing programs and to initiate new ones. Our accumulated net assets help us cover unanticipated costs when important conservation issues emerge.

For the year ended June 30, 2008, 56% of expenditures were for educational programs and conservation and another 26% for member services, including publication of *The Gull*.

—Al Peters

Golden Gate Audubon Statement of Activities

YEARS ENDED JUNE 30, 2008 AND 2007

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	2008 Combined Total	2007 Combined Total
SUPPORT AND REVENUE					
Public Support					
Direct Contributions					
Gifts and Donations	\$ 174,741	\$ 18,704	\$0	\$ 193,445	\$ 238,057
Grants	0	259,057	0	259,057	220,122
Total Direct Contributions	174,741	277,761	0	452,502	458,179
Indirect Contributions					
Earth Share	6,730	0	0	6,730	4,097
Total Public Support	181,471	277,761	0	459,232	462,276
REVENUE					
Membership Dues	103,437	0	0	103,437	100,302
Investment Earnings, Net (Note 4)	(33,525)	0	0	(33,525)	113,243
Merchandise Sales (Net of Direct Expenses of \$8,158 in 2008 and \$6,539 in 2007)	2,328	0	0	2,328	533
Lawsuit Settlement Proceeds	50,000	0	0	50,000	92,140
Other	502	0	0	502	0
Total Revenue	122,742	0	0	122,742	306,218
Total Public Support and Revenue	304,213	277,761	0	581,974	768,494
Net Assets Released From Restriction	343,623	(343,623)	0	0	0
FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES					
Program Services:					
Conservation	223,673	0	0	223,673	210,145
Educational Programs	167,632	0	0	167,632	133,680
Member Services	180,869	0	0	180,869	150,183
Management and General	65,949	0	0	65,949	59,259
Fundraising	62,909	0	0	62,909	55,692
Total Expenses	701,032	0	0	701,032	608,959
Change In Net Assets	(53,196)	(65,862)	0	119,058	159,535
Net Assets At Beginning Of Year	771,429	121,405	55,224	948,058	788,523
Net Assets At End Of Year	\$ 718,233	\$ 55,543	\$ 55,224	\$ 829,000	\$ 948,058

Complete audited financial statements are available upon request from the Golden Gate Audubon office.

Donations

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

GOLDEN EAGLE (\$1,000 OR MORE)

National Audubon Society Baseline Funding (general support)

CLAPPER RAIL (\$100 TO \$199)

Eric Anderson, Anne Cahill

GRANTS

The San Francisco Foundation – Pier 94 Wetland Restoration

The San Francisco Foundation – Cosco Busan Oil Spill Emergency Response

GIFTS (TO \$99)

The Clorox Company Foundation, Ann K. Cross, Sylvia I. DeTrinidad, Lewis J. Feldman, Motorola Foundation, Susan E. Palo & Eric Schroeder, Rachel Watson-Clark, Noreen Weeden & Eddie Bartley, Kristina M. Whitfield

IN KIND

Antonio Catpo - Binoculars

