

THE GULL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY



FOUNDED 1917



Bob Lewis/www.wingbeats.org

Wintering shorebirds like these Marbled Godwits, Willets, and dowitchers at Arrowhead Marsh in Oakland need safe places where they can roost and forage.

Minimizing Disturbances To Birds in the Bay Area

For almost 100 years, Golden Gate Audubon has worked to reduce human-caused disturbances to birds. A recent report from Audubon California demonstrates how such disturbances are constant and potentially dangerous threats to our local bird populations and underscores the need for minimizing disturbances in order to preserve biodiversity in the Bay Area.

The report, *A Review of Human Disturbance Impacts on Waterbirds* by Kathi L. Borgmann (available at <http://bit.ly/zYIw6K>), summarizes 50 studies involving species that occur in the Bay Area and found that 86 percent of the studies reported disturbances having negative impacts on birds. Disturbances included pedestrians and hikers, off-leash and on-leash dogs, and motorized and nonmotorized craft that approached foraging, roosting, or breeding birds too closely.

The report addresses the kinds of disturbances that Golden Gate Audubon members and staff work to reduce every day. For example, it discusses marine-based disturbances to birds that forage on the open water of the bay and that breed on Alcatraz Island, issues that we addressed in our recent comments about the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) Draft Management Plan. We also raised these issues in our appeal to the certification of the Environmental Impact Report for the

MINIMIZING DISTURBANCES continued on page 12

April Is Birdathon Month!

Birdathon is one of Golden Gate Audubon's most important fundraisers each year. It is like a walk-a-thon, except we count bird species. The event is fun, competitive, and educational and is open to birders of all levels, as well as those who cheer them on. All the funds raised benefit our vital work to protect Bay Area habitats for birds and other wildlife and to support our award-winning Eco-Education Programs for children from underserved schools. Our goal for Birdathon 2012 is to reach \$35,000! Please join us!

You can participate by joining a guided bird walk, organizing your own trip, or counting independently. You ask friends and family to pledge a donation to Golden Gate Audubon for a fixed amount or on a "per species" basis. You can also compete for awards and prizes for most species counted in either 4 or 24 consecutive hours and for most money raised. We offer trips for kids and adults and for beginners to advanced birders (see pages 8-9).

The month-long event culminates in the Birdathon Celebration Dinner, held Thursday, May 10. The food is excellent, and it is great fun to see who receives awards and prizes for most species spotted, best bird, most money raised, and other categories. We also honor our annual education and conservation award winners, event sponsors, prize donors, and volunteers. Families are welcome to attend.

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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRD BOX

415.681.7422

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 \$35 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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For Nature Store hours, please call or check the website.

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How to Join the Birdathon

Signing up for Birdathon 2012 is easy. Start by visiting our Birdathon page at www.goldengateaudubon.org and click the Birdathon button in the upper left corner. Or, you can contact us directly at birdathon@goldengateaudubon.org or 510.843.7293. Then choose from among six ways to participate.

- Make a pledge to one or more birders or teams on our Birdathon page.
- Sign up for one or more Birdathon guided walks (see the partial list on pages 8–9) on our Birdathon page or by contacting the trip leader directly. Most guided walks charge a set fee, but we hope you will also pledge more.
- Join someone else's team or form your own team. Team leaders have their own web pages on GGAS's Birdathon site where you can check out the trips or contact the leaders directly. Or, be creative and bird a terrific trail or shoreline with a team of friends. Raise funds for GGAS by asking friends and family to sponsor your sightings.
- Bird on your own. You can set up your own individual Birdathon page, which allows you to e-mail friends, keep track of your pledges, and put up amusing photos.
- Organize a "Big Sit" and make it a picnic party with friends in your backyard, a local park, or another productive spot. Ask people to sponsor you and then count as many species as possible.
- Introduce a young person to birds and nature. Go out with your child or someone else's and compete for Most Species Seen by a Fledgling Birder (ages 5 through 12). Or, set up a team at your child's school and compete for Most Species Seen by a School Team.

If you prefer printed materials, come by our office or call 510.843.7293 and ask for a Birdathon packet. You can also visit our Birdathon booth at REI Berkeley on March 24 and 25 and at REI San Francisco on March 31 and April 1.

You'll be surprised at how easy it is to ask friends, family, and colleagues to support your passion for birds. A simple e-mail or letter telling them what you are doing and why is all it takes to generate support. Everything you need is on our Birdathon page. Plus, if your sponsors donate at least \$25 each, they receive an introductory membership to GGAS.

Remember, Birdathon benefits our important work to protect Bay Area wildlife and habitats and to connect kids with birds and the outdoors through our Eco-Education Programs.

Visit the GGAS Birdathon 2012 page today. Even if you can't go birding, please sponsor a birder or join us at the Birdathon Celebration Dinner. Be a part of the fun while you support Golden Gate Audubon! For more information, visit www.goldengateaudubon.org/birdathon or contact Leah Messinger at 510.843.7293 or birdathon@goldengateaudubon.org.



GGAS Adds a Communications Director

We are delighted to welcome longtime journalist Ilana DeBare as our first Communications Director. This new half-time position, funded by a generous donor, is aimed at increasing public recognition for the great events and important policy advocacy being carried out by our volunteers and staff. Ilana, a former business reporter at the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Sacramento Bee*, is author of *Where Girls Come First*, a history of all-girl schools that grew out of her work helping to start the Julia Morgan School for Girls in Oakland. She started birding when she lived in Sacramento. She recently took her synagogue's retired rabbi on his first birding trip: You can read about it on her personal blog at <http://midlifebatmitzvah.wordpress.com/2012/02/01/wednesday-the-rabbi-went-birding>. Ilana welcomes your ideas about how to publicize our great work. You can reach her at idebare@goldengateaudubon.org.



GGAS AND AMERICA'S CUP

The world's best-known sailing race, the America's Cup, comes to San Francisco Bay this year and July through September 2013. Imagining the huge, hi-tech, catamaran racing boats whizzing from Alcatraz to the Golden Gate Bridge is exciting. Just watching the boats practice is a thrill.

Along with the race, however, come crowds, construction, traffic, spectator boats, and special events. As the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) shows, there will be significant environmental impacts on the Bay Area. GGAS staff and volunteers have attended regular meetings for months, submitted detailed comments on the Draft EIR and other documents, testified at hearings, and organized members and partners to provide input.

GGAS does not oppose the America's Cup, but is working to improve protection of wildlife and habitats. Because of our efforts and those of our partner organizations, the city of San Francisco and the event organizers are changing their plans to reduce and mitigate impacts. Still, there is more work to do, especially as the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service take public comments in preparation for permitting the project.

We encourage you to get involved in providing input to local, state, and federal agencies about the event. Please consider joining our San Francisco Conservation Committee so that we can all enjoy the race with the knowledge that we have adequately protected wildlife in the bay.

SITE CHOSEN FOR NEW UC BERKELEY LAB

The Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL) has selected a 100-acre site in Richmond near San Francisco Bay for development of a second campus. The site is the current location of UC Berkeley's Richmond Field Station. Many Bay Area birders are familiar with this area along the Bay Trail near the Marina Bay condominiums. According to LBNL, the site will eventually house the Joint BioEnergy Institute, the Joint Genome Institute, the Joint Center

for Artificial Photosynthesis, and other programs. The facility will open in 2016 with an estimated 800 employees; additional buildings and employees may be added later.

We are concerned about how the development may affect nearby coastal prairie, seasonal wetland, and shoreline habitats. Environmental impacts may include construction noise and dust, an increase in lighting levels, an increase in traffic and trash at the site, and bird collisions with windows of the new buildings. Our East Bay Conservation Committee has already submitted comments to the LBNL raising these issues and will continue to participate in the planning and environmental review process. Volunteers interested in this issue should contact committee chair Phil Price at pnprice@creekcats.com.

RESTORE HABITAT AT GGAS SITES

Please join us for workdays at our habitat restoration sites. For site details and directions, please go to www.goldengateaudubon.org/volunteer. Check the GGAS website for activities related to Earth Day, April 22.

- Pier 94, San Francisco: March 3, April 7, 9 a.m. – noon.
- Alameda Wildlife Refuge, Alameda: March 11, 9 a.m. – noon.
- Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline, Oakland: March 17, April 21, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
- Golden Gate Park near the Bison Paddock, San Francisco: March 17, April 21, 9 a.m. – noon, with SF Recreation and Parks.

CONCERN ABOUT RODENTICIDE PROMPTS EAST BAY CITIES TO ACT

Two East Bay cities have joined the campaign to reduce the use of rodenticides that the federal Environmental Protection Agency has deemed pose an unreasonable risk to birds and other wildlife, as well as children and pets. Late last year, the city of Albany passed a resolution urging local businesses to stop selling rat and mouse poisons prohibited under the EPA's Risk Mitigation Decisions for Ten Rodenticides. In mid-Jan-

uary, the city of Berkeley followed suit. Says Albany Councilwoman Joann Wile, "It's very important that we educate the public about the dangers of certain rodenticide products and that we consider all wildlife when we are dealing with any pest problem."

The city of Richmond is considering a similar ordinance, and we plan to approach Emeryville about joining the campaign.

SPEAK UP TO SUPPORT CANDLESTICK POINT SRA

Candlestick Point State Recreation Area in San Francisco is popular with birders and also provides much-needed open space and recreational opportunities for many residents, especially those in the Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood. Due to state budget cuts, this SRA is one of 70 parks on the list of potential park closures. California State Parks has worked to keep as many parks as possible open and to find outside donors to help fund the threatened parks. Despite these efforts, Candlestick Point remains on the closure list.

You can help by writing San Francisco Supervisor Malia Cohen, who represents the district that includes the park and has commented on the importance of parks in the city's southeastern corner. Contact her at Malia.Cohen@sfgov.org and ask her to advocate on the state level to help keep Candlestick Point open. To find out other actions you can take, go to www.savestateparks.org.

Stephanie Strait Leaves Golden Gate Audubon

Many of you have spoken with GGAS Office Manager Stephanie Strait when you registered for a class, signed up for a field trip, or bought bird seed. In December, we bid Stephanie a fond farewell as she accepted a position with Columbia College. Please join us in thanking Stephanie for her excellent work keeping GGAS running smoothly for three years and in wishing her the best of luck.

San Francisco CBC Results in High Numbers

Tuesday, December 27, brought close to perfect weather for the 2011 San Francisco Christmas Bird Count. Active birders numbering 123 formed 18 teams that covered the northern peninsula. Our species total of 176 was the second highest for this count. The total of 60,704 birds observed was among our higher counts for individual birds.

Overwintering neotropical birds and other species that usually winter to the south were a big part of the picture for the 2011 count. The birds that usually range from southern California to South America included Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Tropical Kingbird, Nashville Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Hermit Warbler (three individuals), Palm Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Western Tanager, and Orchard Oriole.

Other unusual birds included Greater White-fronted Goose (four individuals), Cackling Goose (six), Long-tailed Duck (four), and one each for Eurasian Wigeon, Harlequin Duck, Ancient Murrelet, Acorn Woodpecker, and Rock Wren. During the count week, three days before and three days after the count, we added quite a few rare birds. The count week birds were Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Northern Fulmar, Bald Eagle, Glaucous Gull, and Burrowing Owl. Sadly, we missed four species because observers failed to submit documentation.

Birds of the coastal scrub continue to be of concern. California Quail numbered only 19, our second-lowest count since the San Francisco CBC began in 1983. Bewick's Wren, Wrentit, and Spotted Towhee continue as birds on the verge of extirpation in the count area. The diminishing numbers are caused by loss of habitat to ongoing urbanization, the impact of cats and dogs, and predation. The reasons for the loss of species restricted to rocky shorelines are harder to explain. We missed Wandering Tattler for the eighth consecutive year, earning this species the dubious honor of being included in an ever-growing list of birds extirpated from the northern peninsula during winter. Ruddy Turnstone seems to be extirpated from the Pacific Coast but hangs on in San Francisco Bay. Surfbird and Black

Turnstone are species we are monitoring, but both seem to be holding their own.

Five-year averages for diving ducks continue to suggest that these birds are in significant trouble. For the past several years, White-winged Scoter numbers were down more than 90 percent from the mid-1980s. Between 1983 and 1987, the average number for this species was 206 birds. Our average for the past five-year period is 61, thanks mostly to the 226 birds seen in 2110. Surf Scoter numbers are down during the same period, from an average of 5,422 birds to 1,278. Since San Francisco Bay and the surrounding ocean waters are the central part of the Surf Scoter's winter range, this drop in numbers is alarming.

The count for American Crows rebounded to 566 from last year's slight decline at 405. Though Common Raven numbers rebounded to 599 from the 2010 count of 502, the total remains well below the record high of 696 in 2008. The meteoric increase in numbers of both species appears to have resumed.

The unexplained drop in the numbers of Mourning Doves and Brewer's Blackbirds since the start of the San Francisco CBC in 1983 continues to be of concern. Both species are among the most numerous in western North America, but both have declined on the northern peninsula by about 50 percent since the mid-1980s.

By contrast, exotic species are doing remarkably well on the northern peninsula. Eurasian Collared-Doves numbered 98. Red-masked Parakeets totaled 131. We only had 2,790 European Starlings, down considerably from last year's high count of 5,073. The Ring-necked Pheasants we added last year—they had been at Harding Golf Course for a couple of years—seem to have disappeared.

Wandering Tattler, American Bittern, Western Screech-Owl, Loggerhead Shrike, and Horned Lark are all species that have not been reported by observers on five or more San Francisco CBCs, so we believe that they are now extirpated from the northern peninsula during winter. California Clapper Rail and Ruddy Turnstone



Calvin Lou

Alan Hopkins found this Dusky-capped Flycatcher foraging in the meadow across from Mallard Lake in Golden Gate Park.

seem to be the most likely species to follow.

At the compilation dinner, held at the Log Cabin at the Presidio, about 80 birders gathered to enjoy a hearty meal and hear the results from all the teams in the field. Lisa Owens Viani, GGAS Development Director, and Noreen Weeden, Volunteer Coordinator, planned the dinner. We also thank Stephanie Strait for her help handling many tasks. GGAS staff members Mark Welther, Anthony DeCicco, and Carol Handelman assisted at the dinner, as did volunteers Marty Maricle, Chris Okon, Larry Pettit, Jay Pierrepont, Tsang Ruby, Lyn Stein, and Ellen Szita.

The 2012 San Francisco Christmas Bird Count will be held on Thursday, December 27. Be sure to mark your calendar.

—Dan Murphy and Alan Hopkins, Compilers

A Thank-You to Scope City

Scope City in San Francisco has generously donated services for the repair of binoculars and tripods used in our adult volunteer and Eco-Education children's programs. We thank Scope City for its support of these important programs.

Pelican Dreams

Judy Irving

San Francisco: Thursday, March 15—7 p.m. refreshments, 7:30 program
(free for GGAS members, \$5 nonmembers)

Years before making *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill*, filmmaker Judy Irving had begun researching her favorite bird, the Brown Pelican. She is now in mid-production on *Pelican Dreams* and will show excerpts from this work in progress. The film features a young pelican that landed—tired, hungry, and confused—on the roadway of the Golden Gate Bridge. The incident launched her search for the people who know pelicans best: biologists, wildlife rehabilitators, surfers, and fishermen.

Producer/director Judy Irving is executive director of Pelican Media, a nonprofit production company. In addition to *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill*, her films include *Dark Circle*, about nuclear weapons and nuclear power; *Quiet Revolution*, on sustainable development in rural areas; and a short about the Alameda Wildlife Refuge. Judy holds a masters in film and broadcasting from Stanford University and is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship in film and of Sundance and Emmy awards.

San Francisco Speaker Series: First Unitarian Universalist Church and Center, 1187 Franklin Street at Geary. Visit www.uusf.org/visitors_faq.html, and use the Map It! link on the left for directions. Public transit, street parking, and parking in a lot for a fee are available.



Judy Irving with the star of *Pelican Dreams*.

The Grizzlies of Yellowstone

Michael Leach

Berkeley: Thursday, April 19—7 p.m. refreshments, 7:30 program
(free for GGAS members, \$5 nonmembers)

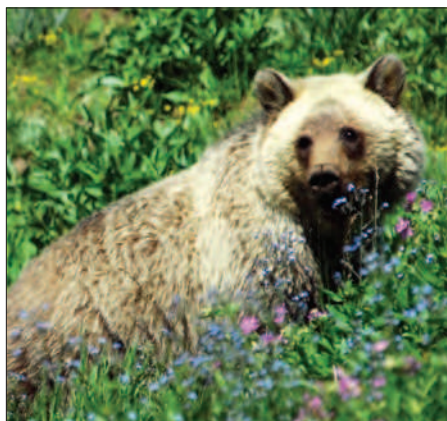
This celebration of the Yellowstone ecosystem will inspire those who already know Yellowstone to return to this majestic region and will motivate others to discover the raw power of one of North America's wildest landscapes. Michael Leach will focus on the importance of keystone species, such as grizzlies and wolves, as well as on the plight of the Yellowstone bison, and Yellowstone's hope for the future. He will also describe how Yellowstone Country Guardians works to advocate for this important landscape.

Michael Leach is executive director and founder of Yellowstone Country Guardians.

His time as a ranger naturalist and as the Bear Education Ranger in Yellowstone National Park led him to start the Yellowstone-based nonprofit organization. Through youth-driven education and outreach programs, Yellowstone Country Guardians fosters a commitment from local communities to ensure that the Yellowstone region remains a symbol of wildness.

Berkeley Speaker Series: Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda (between Solano and Marin).

Directions: www.northbrae.org/directions.html



Grizzly bear in Yellowstone.

Nathan Varley

Travel with GGAS

Two trips in our travel program still have openings. Ed and Sil Pembleton of Naturalist Journeys will lead a trip, April 16–23, to Florida's Everglades and Sanibel Island, where participants will visit hotspots in the only subtropical wilderness in the continental United States. Target birds include Roseate Spoonbill, Purple Gallinule, and the endemic Florida Scrub-Jay. The \$2,290 cost per person includes guides, ground transportation, lodging, and most meals. An optional extension, April 23–27 (\$985), goes to the Florida Keys and then by boat to Dry Tortugas National Park for Masked Booby, Magnificent Frigatebird, and Bridled Tern.

In June, Rich Cimino of Yellowbilled Tours will lead four trips to Nome, Alaska, each of which is limited to only four participants. Dates are June 8–12, June 12–16, June 16–20, and June 21–25. The tours will cover prime birding areas along the seacoast and the alpine tundra surrounding Nome. Most of the birds will be in their resplendent breeding plumages, rarely if ever seen in the Lower 48. The \$2,400 cost per person includes guide, lodging, ground transportation, and airport transfers, but not meals.

The cost of each trip includes a \$150 tax-deductible donation to Golden Gate Audubon. For more details, go to Field Trips on the GGAS website. For full itineraries, contact Chris Bard, GGAS Travel Coordinator, at chrisbard@earthlink.net or 510.522.5699.

Observations Online

Bruce Mast's column covering notable bird sightings for December 2011 and January 2012 can be found on the Golden Gate Audubon website under Birding Resources.



FIELD TRIPS

STEVE LOMBARDI, COORDINATOR

\$	Entrance fee
	Biking trip

Field trips are open to birders of all ages and levels of experience. To ensure the safety and enjoyment of participants, dogs are not allowed on trips. There are no exceptions to this policy unless expressly stated in the field trip announcement. For questions about individual field trips, contact the leaders. For updates to the trips, go to www.golden-gateaudubon.org.

Tilden Regional Park

Berkeley

**Fridays, March 2, April 6,
8:30 – 10:30 a.m.**

Alan Kaplan, 510.526.7609 (messages),
LNKPLN@earthlink.net

Meet at the Tilden Nature Area parking lot, at the north end of Central Park Dr. This walk will be on dirt roads, fire trails, and narrow paths, mostly level or with easy switchbacks. The theme for the trips is migration—who is leaving and who is returning, where they come from and where they go—as well as the physiology of migration. Restrooms available.

San Francisco Botanical Garden

Sundays, March 4, April 1, 8 – 10:30 a.m.

Ginny Marshall, ginnybirder@sbcglobal.net; Dominik Mosur, polskatata@yahoo.com; Alan Ridley, allanrid@pacbell.net; Helen McKenna, 415.566.3241 (Leaders vary by month.)

Meet at the front gate of the garden in Golden Gate Park, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. This monthly trip is oriented toward helping beginning birders develop their skills in spotting and identifying birds. The garden charges \$7/person if you are not an SF resident or garden member. Bring identification for residency and membership status.

Aquatic Park and Waterfront

San Francisco

**Saturdays, March 10, April 21,
10 – 11:30 a.m.**

Carol Kiser, carol_kiser@nps.gov,
415.447.5000

On this walk for children and beginners, and all others, we will look for resident and migrating birds. Meet at the entrance to the Hyde Street Pier at Hyde and Jeffer-

son on the western border of Fisherman's Wharf. Nearby parking is at the foot of Van Ness Ave. (free for 4 hours), Ghirardelli Square, and the Anchorage.

Corona Heights

San Francisco

Fridays, March 16, April 20, 8 – 10 a.m.

Brian Fitch; Dominik Mosur, polskatata@yahoo.com (Leaders vary by month.)

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

Seal Rocks and Sutro Park

Saturday, March 17, 9 a.m. – noon

Martha Wessitsh, martha@wessitsh.com,
415.681.8059, 415.533.4470 (cell)

Meet at the parking lot above the Cliff House and the old Sutro Baths, Pt. Lobos Ave. and Merrie Way. We will scope birds on the offshore rocks and in the pond formed by some of the ruins. Then we'll look for seabirds from the Cliff House. Crossing the street to Sutro Park, we'll find land birds. Easy walking; restrooms available. Heavy rain cancels.

Redwood Regional Park

Alameda and Contra Costa Counties

Sunday, March 18, 8 – 10:30 a.m.

Glen Tepke, g.tepke@comcast.net,
617.894.0146

On this easy walk through beautiful redwoods, riparian thickets, and oak-bay woodlands, we'll look for lingering winter visitors, residents, and maybe some early spring migrants, including Varied Thrush,

Pacific Wren, and Townsend's Warbler. Restrooms available. Meet at the first parking lot on the left, after the entrance kiosk and fish ladder. The entrance is on Redwood Rd. in Oakland. See map at www.ebparks.org/parks/redwood.

Big Break and Marsh Creek Trail

Eastern Contra Costa County

Saturday, March 24

Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233,
kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com

Meet at the EBRPD Big Break trailhead in Oakley at 9 a.m. The paved trail has views of the delta, a marsh, and sewer ponds. The area is an excellent place to see many species. Bring lunch and water. Dress in layers. Bicycle helmet required. Rain cancels. If you have room in your vehicle for an extra bike or if you need a ride, please contact Kathy at the earliest opportunity. Reservations not necessary, but an e-mail or phone call would be appreciated. Kathy will not take transit on this trip. Contact her if you want transit info. Meet at the trailhead off Big Break Rd. See map at www.ebparks.org/parks/big_break.

Honey Lake and Greater Sage-Grouse

Lassen County

Saturday – Sunday, March 24 – 25

Dave Quady, 510.704.9353,
davequady@att.net

Spaces may still be available on this trip to see Greater Sage-Grouse displaying on a lek and many resident and wintering raptors and waterfowl. The trip is limited to 20 participants. Details will be provided to those confirmed on the trip.

Callippe Preserve

Pleasanton, Alameda County

Sunday, March 25, noon – 4:30 p.m.

Rich Cimino, rscimino@gmail.com;
Steve Lombardi, hot-rock@sbcglobal.net,
925.785.0130 (cell)

Callippe Preserve offers easy walking through rolling hills and should provide

looks at resident grassland and oak woodland species and possible early migrants such as Western Kingbird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and Pacific-slope Flycatcher. The trail surrounds the Callippe golf course and also borders areas designated for preservation of the endangered Callippe Silverspot Butterfly. Meet at the south end of the clubhouse parking lot. For directions, go to Contact Us and then Calippe Trails on www.playcallippe.com. After the trip, participants can join the leaders for an optional dinner at Sweet Tomatoes in Pleasanton.

Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park

Oakland, Alameda County

Wednesdays, March 28, April 25,

9:30 a.m. – noon

Bob Lewis, 510.845.5001,

bob@wingbeats.org (3/28); Hilary Powers, 510.834.1066, hilary@powersedit.com; Ruth Tobey, 510.528.2093, ruthtobey@gmail.com (4/25)

Meet 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 winter migrants will be starting to move on, but many will remain and be donning their party dress for the mating season. We expect the cormorants to be nesting again, and the egret rookery will be active for the first time in seven years, given the interest that the birds were showing in the lake's islands last fall.

Take the 12, N, or NL bus to Grand and Perkins, and walk into the park on Perkins. Best parking is at the

boathouse lot near the spherical cage. Entry, via Bellevue near Children's Fairyland, is \$2 if the kiosk is occupied when you arrive (which it probably will be). Buy a 2-hour ticket and try to park in the boathouse lot, where no one checks how long cars sit.

Stevens Creek Trail, Mountain View Shoreline, Palo Alto Baylands

Santa Clara County

Saturday, April 21

Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233,

kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com

This is one of the best birding spots on San Francisco Bay. We should find many species on the bay, on ponds, and in sloughs. Much of the trip will be on paved trails and designated bike lanes, with some on gravel and some on roads. There are no hills. Any rain but very light cancels. Bring lunch and water. Dress in layers. Bicycle helmet required. Participants should meet at 9:30 a.m. at the Mountain View Caltrain Station on E. Evelyn Ave.

Car: From Hwy. 101 in Mountain View, exit on Moffett. Go 1 mile west (away from bay), just past the Central Expressway, then turn left on E. Evelyn Ave. and go a short distance to Caltrain Station. Access to the trail is just south of the station. **Transit:** BART leaves MacArthur at 7:35 a.m. and arrives in Millbrae at 8:29. Caltrain leaves Millbrae at 8:39 a.m. and arrives in Mountain View at 9:29. Have crisp bills and quarters or use a credit card for the fare. Santa Clara Valley Bikeways Maps (with transit connections): www.vta.org/bike_information/maps.html.

Mines Road

Alameda County

Saturday, April 28, 8 a.m.

Dave Quady, 510.704.9353,

davequady@att.net

The trip will begin in Livermore and end there in the early evening, with opportunities to end earlier, or bird later, if you wish. We hope to see Lewis's Woodpecker, Phainopepla, and Bullock's Oriole. Wild Turkey, Greater Roadrunner, and Golden Eagle are among the other possibilities. Bring food and liquids. The trip is limited to the first 20 participants who sign up, beginning at noon on Monday, March 26. Carpooling is encouraged to and from Livermore, and is essential during the day because of limited parking along the route. Directions and carpooling information will be provided to those confirmed on the trip.

Volunteer Opportunities

Be a Lake Merritt Docent

The nesting season at Lake Merritt in Oakland promises to be a productive one. Double-crested Cormorants will be nesting on the islands, and the egret rookery will be active. From March through May, GGAS docents with scopes show the birds to park users and share information about the lake and its inhabitants. We provide the necessary training. To join this program, contact Volunteer Coordinator Noreen Weeden, nweeden@goldengateaudubon.org.

Coordinate the GGAS Travel Program

Our Travel with Golden Gate Audubon program enables birders to go to such prime birding hotspots as Honduras, Alaska, Ecuador, and Mexico. Chris Bard, who has done a terrific job as coordinator for the past two years, is leaving the position this summer. The volunteer travel coordinator works with our education director and education committee to evaluate possible trips, contacts potential leaders, and helps promote the trips to members. Ideally, the coordinator has a knowledge of guided birding trips. This important program not only serves members but helps support our conservation and education programs. To find out more about this volunteer opportunity, please contact Noreen Weeden, Volunteer Coordinator, nweeden@goldengateaudubon.org.

Serve as a Host at Audubon Canyon Ranch

Every year, from mid-March to mid-July, thousands of visitors eagerly come to Audubon Canyon Ranch's Martin Griffin Preserve in western Marin County to see one of the most significant and well-studied nesting sites on the West Coast for Great Egrets and Great Blue Herons. Golden Gate Audubon, which helped establish the ACR, helps provide hosts during the public season. These volunteers greet visitors and answer questions about the heronry. All the information that hosts need is provided in advance. GGAS volunteers are needed for the following weekends: March 17 and 18; April 7 and 8 (Easter); May 5 (Cinco de Mayo), 6, 26, and 27; June 16 and 17 (Father's Day); and July 14 and 15. If you'd like to volunteer or have questions, contact Anna-Marie Bratton, annamariobb@earthlink.net. Go to www.egret.org for more information on the ACR.

Birdathon Field Trips

Please support Golden Gate Audubon by joining one of our Birdathon trips. To increase your pledge, ask family and friends to donate in honor of your participation. Even if you are not going on a trip, you can make a contribution in support of a leader. Each leader has a Birdathon page on www.goldengateaudubon.org/birdathon, where donations can be made.

Note that some trips limit the number of participants. To sign up for these trips, go to the leader's Birdathon page, where you can register and find information on meeting places and directions. In some cases, the leaders are competing to see the most species in a 4-hour or 24-hour period. Birders may not stop for lunch but will eat while in the field or in transit. Come prepared with lunch, snacks, and liquids.

For the most up-to-date Birdathon field trip list, go to our Birdathon page.



Big 4 Hours: Abbott's Lagoon

[Point Reyes National Seashore,](#)
[Marin County](#)

Sunday, April 1, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Emilie Strauss, 510.540.8749

We will hike a total of about 4 miles on the Abbott's Lagoon Trail to look for ducks and Snowy Plovers and other shorebirds, as well as flowering giant bog and yellow bush lupine and cobweb thistle. The trail is fairly flat but sandy. Meet at the Abbott's Lagoon parking lot on Pierce Point Rd. Heavy rain cancels. For a map, go to www.nps.gov/pore.

Big 4 Hours: Lake Merced

[San Francisco](#)

Sunday, April 1, 8 a.m. to noon

Angie Geiger, 415.264.0069

Team: Geiger Counters

Starting at the concrete bridge on John Muir Dr., we'll explore the rich areas on both sides of the bridge, look through the many species in the water, and check the Agua Vista Canal. We will then carpool to the Boat House and Harding Park. Adults and children, beginners, and experts are all welcome. For a map, go to www.sanfranciscodays.com/lake-merced.

The trip is limited to 8 participants.

Big 4 Hours: Oakland

[Alameda County](#)

Sunday, April 1, 8 a.m. – noon

Glen Tepke, g.tepke@comcast.net,
617.894.0146

Team: Oakland Ospreys

On this fast-paced trip, you'll have a

shot at the record books by seeing the most species in Alameda County in 4 hours. The trip leader is the founder of The Dippers, the winning team in several Birdathon competitive categories over the last two years. We'll start in Dimond Park and carpool to Lake Merritt and Middle Harbor Shoreline Park in single-minded pursuit of a big list. Birding includes a couple of miles of easy walking. Beginners are welcome with the understanding that we won't have as much time to linger and study birds as on a regular field trip. Rain does not cancel.

Bring a scope if you have one. You must be willing to carpool between sites due to limited parking at Lake Merritt. Please e-mail Glen if you can drive other participants. Restrooms available.

The trip is limited to 12 participants. Participants must register for the Oakland Ospreys on the Birdathon website and must make a minimum pledge of \$50 for the trip or 50 cents per species.

City of Alameda

Sunday, April 1, 8:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Gary and Chris Bard, 510.301.2987,
chrisbard@earthlink.net

Let's see how many species we can find on the island of Alameda and in the Bay Farm area. We will meet near South Shore Beach and carpool to various locations. Please bring a scope if you have one. From I-880, drive to the south end of Park St. Turn right on Shoreline Dr. and right on the next street toward the shopping center. Meet on the left in the

parking area across the street from the car wash. A donation of \$25 or more is requested if you are not a registered Birdathon participant collecting donations on your own.

American River Trail

Friday – Saturday, April 6 – 7

Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233,
kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com

The 23-mile American River Trail between Sacramento and Folsom is rich in birdlife, and the trail is fairly flat. We'll travel by train to reach the trail, and many birds can be seen along the way, especially through Suisun Marsh. The trail begins at Discovery Park, about 2 miles from the Amtrak station, and there is easy access from the station through Old Sacramento to the river and then on a connecting trail to the park. The trail ends at Folsom.

On Friday morning, we'll meet at the Emeryville station and then start biking as soon as the train arrives in Sacramento. We'll spend the night at the Larkspur Landing Hotel in Folsom (participants make their own reservations). We'll return on Saturday from Folsom, arriving in Emeryville in the late afternoon. It is possible to make a one-day trip by driving about 2.5 hours to Folsom from the East Bay and using the Sacramento Light Rail system. Recent riding experience is a must to ensure the stamina necessary for such a long ride.

The trip is limited to 12 participants. The leader will provide a specific train schedule to confirmed participants.

Big 4 Hours: Hayward

Alameda County

Sunday, April 8, 8 a.m. – noon

Glen Tepke, g.tepke@comcast.net,
617.894.0146

Team: Hayward Harriers

With this fast-paced trip, you have a shot at the record books by seeing the most species in Alameda County in 4 hours. The trip leader is the founder of The Dippers, the winning team in several Birdathon competitive categories over the last two years. We'll start at Garin Regional Park in Hayward and carpool to the Hayward Regional Shoreline in single-minded pursuit of a big list. Birding includes a couple of miles of easy walking. Beginners are welcome with the understanding that we won't have as much time to linger and study birds as on a regular field trip. Rain does not cancel.

Bring a scope if you have one. Please e-mail Glen if you can drive other participants to the Hayward shoreline and back to Garin. Restrooms available.

The trip is limited to 12 participants. Participants must register for the Hayward Harriers on the Birdathon website and must make a minimum pledge of \$50 for the trip or 50 cents per species.

Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park

Oakland, Alameda County

Sunday, April 8, 9:30 a.m. – noon

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

The winter migrants will be beginning to move on, but many will remain, and will be beginning to don their party dress for the next mating season. We expect the cormorants to be nesting again, and the egret rookery will likely be active for the first time in seven years. Participants should meet near the Nature Center at Perkins and Bellevue. For directions and parking information, see the March 28 Lake Merritt trip on page 7.

Lake Del Valle

Alameda County

Sunday, April 8, 8 a.m. – noon

Rich Cimino, rscimino@gmail.com;
Steve and Carol Lombardi, hot-rock@
sbcglobal.net, 925.785.0130 (cell)

Lake Del Valle near Livermore is a pretty park with miles of shoreline surrounded by varied habitat. The Eastern Alameda CBC had 100 species there, so we should see plenty of birds, including Bald Eagles, Yellow-billed Magpies, breeding Western Grebes, and neotropical migrants like Western Kingbird and Ash-throated Flycatcher, along with the usual oak woodland, scrub, chaparral, and grassland residents. Participants should meet at the Rocky Ridge Visitor Center next to the lake. The leaders will probably bird until 1 p.m. and then have lunch in the park. Directions: www.ebparks.org. Restrooms available. \$

Participants must make a pledge of \$40 for the trip or 40 cents per species.

Inspiration Point

Tilden Regional Park, Contra Costa County

Friday, April 13, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Alan Kaplan, 510.526.7609 (messages),
LNKPLN@earthlink.net

Are you paraskevidekatriaphilic? Today's your lucky day! Join Alan for a Birdathon walk in along the Nimitz Way, a paved, mostly flat trail. Meet at Inspiration Point off Wildcat Canyon Rd. Directions: www.ebparks.org. Restrooms available.

Alan will match donations up to a total of \$500.

San Francisco and the Peninsula

Saturday, April 14, 7:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Dan and Joan Murphy,
murphsf@comcast.net, 415.564.0074

Team: Murphy's Mob (Many Observers)
We'll meet at the Inspiration Point parking lot in the Presidio, just inside the Arguello Gate (map: www.nps.gov/prsf/planyourvisit/maps), and then drive to birding spots in San Francisco and on the peninsula, perhaps as far as Palo Alto. Carpooling is encouraged. The trip is timed to catch the beginning of shorebird migration. During the past 2 years, we have seen just over 100 species.

The trip is limited to 30 participants. The suggested minimum pledge for individuals or families is 50 cents per bird. More details, including any change in the meeting place, will be sent to confirmed participants.

Palm Springs, Morongo Valley, and Joshua Tree

Friday – Sunday, April 27 – 29

Rusty Scalf, 510.666.9936,
rscalf@sonic.net; Emilie Strauss

The trip begins about 8 a.m. Friday morning and finishes mid-afternoon Sunday. In that time, we'll cover the Sonoran Desert, the Mojave Desert, and a splendid cottonwood oasis and elevations of 400–4,500 feet. We'll see desert birds such as Verdin, Black-throated Sparrow, Cactus Wren, and Scott's Oriole as well as northbound migrants of every type. High and low deserts have very different floras and host a remarkable and diverse reptile fauna. The high desert might be in bloom.

Birders are responsible for their own lodging and meals and for getting to and from Palm Springs. We may rent a van for the birding portion of the trip and share the expenses.

The trip is limited to 14 participants. Participants must make a pledge of \$50. Confirmed participants will receive a detailed itinerary.

Clear Lake Photo Safari

Lakeport, Lake County

Monday, April 30, 7:15 – 10:30 a.m.

Bob Lewis, 510.845.5001, 510.725.7696

On this early-morning photographic exploration of Clear Lake, participants will travel by pontoon boat looking for nesting Green Herons (or young), Great Blue Herons, and other species. Everyone must be at the dock no later than 7:15 a.m. It is best stay overnight at Clear Lake (Motel 8 at Upper Lake is 20 minutes from Lakeport) for early-morning departure.

The trip is limited to 5 participants. The fee of \$80 covers the cost of the boat and a donation to GGAS.

Donations

Many thanks to our generous donors! Donations from November 19, 2011 to December 31, 2011.

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Spring and Summer Classes

Albany Adult School. Please watch the GGAS website or www.wingbeats.org for the schedule of spring classes. Registration is through the AAS website: <http://adulthood.ausdk12.org>.

Birds of the Sierra. Golden Gate Audubon continues to offer this popular class, held in a superb place to see Sierra birds in June. As in past years, we will hold two sessions: Birds of the Sierra I, with Bob Lewis and Rusty Scalf, June 7–10, and Birds of the Sierra II, with Bob Lewis and Eddie Bartley, June 14–17. Both classes begin at the Yuba Pass parking lot on Highway 49 between Sierraville and Bassetts. Each class is limited to 35 participants, who are responsible for arranging their own accommodations. Information on fees and other details is on the GGAS website. You can sign up now for the Sierra classes by calling the GGAS office at 510.843.2222.

Oakland CBC Sets Record Species Count

Unlike the year before, the weather was glorious when midnight Saturday gave way to Sunday, December 18, 2011, and Oakland's 71st Christmas Bird Count began. Before daylight, a hardy handful of enthusiastic owlers took advantage of the weather and detected more owls than on any count since 2001. The owlers' numbers swelled after dawn to 205 field observers, who blanketed Oakland's 15-mile-diameter count circle on land and on water, while another 15 folks counted birds around their feeders and yards.

By sunset, participants had found 183 species, more than on any previous Oakland count. One reason: Of our 163 "regular" species—those recorded at least eight of the last ten years—we missed only three: Red Knot, Short-billed Dowitcher, and Bonaparte's Gull. Another reason: We found four species new to the count, one of which, a Clay-colored Sparrow, was chosen as the count's best bird. Another, a Red-necked Phalarope at Bay Farm Island, was only the second phalarope ever recorded on the count. The non-native Eurasian Collared-Dove, already well established throughout California, made a splashy debut in three coast-side areas. A European Goldfinch found on private land completed the quartet. This non-native bird understandably puzzled its discoverer until he turned to the "Exotic Finches" page in "big Sibley."

Other notable species included Hammond's Flycatcher (Dunsmuir House, Oakland), Ross's Goose (Bay Farm Island, Alameda), Red-necked Grebe (North Boat), Common Gallinule (Oakland International Airport), two Wandering Tattlers (South Boat and Berkeley waterfront), House Wren (Berkeley), Nashville Warbler (Bay Farm Island), Black-throated Gray Warbler (Emeryville, present for at least its third winter), and Western Tanager (Bay Farm Island). All had been recorded no more than three times in the last 10 years. One big miss: Tufted Duck, which is rare anywhere on the West Coast but has been present on Lake Merritt most winters since 1994. A tuft-less male was seen the day before, but missed on count day.

However, birders found only 87,391 individual birds, 7 percent fewer than our recent 10-year average. And only once in the first 60 Oakland CBCs were fewer birds counted. Why so few birds? Perhaps the main short-term culprit was the mild, dry fall across much of western North America. Several other CBCs noted that waterfowl and other migratory species have apparently been slow to push south. But we shouldn't lose sight of the larger, long-term trends: declining bird populations overall and diminishing local habitat inexorably reduce the numbers of birds to be found.

Yard watchers often make important contributions, sometimes finding species that field observers miss. That was the case again: like last year, a yard watcher in Albany noted an *Amazona* sp. parrot, probably a Red-crowned Parrot.

KQED-FM's *Quest* radio program enabled the public to participate vicariously in Oakland's count. Andrea Kissack and Nancy Warren spent the day with Kevin McKereghan's Pt. Isabel team and with yard watcher Phila Rogers, and produced a segment that aired twice on January 2. You can relive their experience at <http://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/kqed-s-quest-science-radio/id214663465>. Thanks to Phila and Kevin, and to others who contributed to this fine program.

Oakland's compilation dinners are always fun. Besides enjoying a fine meal,

diners have the satisfaction of sharing tales of their day in the field, the drama of hearing what others experienced, and the thrill of learning what unusual species were found within the count circle. This year's dinner also formally launched the newly published *Alameda County Breeding Bird Atlas*, and gave 120 diners an opportunity to join Golden Gate Audubon Executive Director Mark Welther in honoring the team that produced it.

Lisa Owens Viani, GGAS Development Director, ensured that the decorations, the food, and the atmosphere did justice to the occasion. She was ably assisted by Elinor Blake, Marjorie Blackwell, Jan Collins, Janet Mandelstam, Fari Pour Ansari, Jacqui Smalley, Helen Vandeman, and Linda Wraxall. Thanks to them all.

Our tasks as compilers benefited from Stephanie Strait's support in many areas, the generosity of the skippers of our two boats, and especially the efforts of our 29 indefatigable area leaders. We thank them, and the rest of the 220 CBC participants (plus anyone we inadvertently overlooked), for another successful count.

Oakland's 72nd CBC will take place on Sunday, December 16, 2012. We hope for fair weather, good birds, and your participation—no matter your age or your birding ability, we hope you'll join the count. See you then!

—Dave Quady and Bob Lewis, compilers



Patricia Bacchetti

A Hammond's Flycatcher at Dunsmuir House was only the second of its species ever found on an Oakland CBC.



Glen Tepke

One of two Wandering Tattlers seen on CBC day was observed from the South Boat on a breakwater in Alameda.

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MINIMIZING DISTURBANCES from page 1

proposed 34th America's Cup (see page 3).

Because the majority of our projects involve trying to reduce disturbances to birds and their habitats, we rely on these kinds of reports and studies to document the impacts, explain their negative consequences for birds, and propose measures to reduce disturbances. The studies covered by the Audubon California report document that disturbances reduce a bird's ability to hunt for food, to rest, or to breed successfully. The report also discusses how disturbances cost precious energy, reducing birds' survivability, and can result in nest abandonment. These disturbances can contribute to population declines, especially when combined with stressors such as habitat loss, declines in prey availability, and other environmental impacts.

The Audubon California report also demonstrates the need for local research and management measures tailored to fit local needs. Based on its findings, the report offers several recommendations to reduce disturbances, including:

- 250-meter buffer zone for sensitive foraging, roosting, and breeding areas (significantly larger than the 100-meter buffer proposed around Alcatraz's breeding bird colonies or as part of the America's Cup project)
- routing land and water trails away from ecologically important or sensitive areas
- seasonal closures of sensitive areas, where appropriate
- modifying development plans on the former Alameda Naval Air Station to reduce impacts and threats to the endangered California Least Tern and other species that use the area
- monitoring and commenting on the development of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in the East Bay (see page 3)
- monitoring and protecting Western Burrowing Owls that winter at Cesar Chavez Park in Berkeley

These kinds of restrictions can be extremely unpopular with recreational users and some members of the community. Frequently, Golden Gate Audubon members and staff have to step up and promote these measures despite the controversy they may cause. Without our involvement, concerns for birds and other wildlife will often go unheard, and conservation measures will not be considered, let alone implemented.

Golden Gate Audubon members and staff are actively engaged in several projects with the intent of minimizing impacts to birds. In addition to our involvement in the GGNRA and with the America's Cup, we are working on the following projects:

- opposing the installation of artificial turf and 60-foot-tall lights in the western end of Golden Gate Park, an area that has always been maintained in a more natural condition
- promoting responsible dog ownership, including compliance with leash laws and creation of enclosed off-leash areas that protect wildlife, dogs, and humans in shared open space areas

Despite the controversy that our positions on these and other issues may create, Golden Gate Audubon members and staff understand that unless we engage on multiple fronts throughout the bay, disturbances to birds and other wildlife will only become more acute as the growing human population makes ever-increasing demands on the wildlife and habitats that remain.

We encourage our members to get involved and help protect a few, safe places for birds to forage, roost, and breed in the Bay Area. Please consider joining our San Francisco or East Bay Conservation Committee or the Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge.

—Mike Lynes, Conservation Director