

THE GULL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY // VOL. 99 NO. 3 SUMMER 2014



NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM— CRUCIAL TO SF'S WILDLIFE FUTURE

BY ILANA DEBARE

The SF Birds online discussion group simmered with a poignant conversation this spring: How many California Quail were left in Golden Gate Park? Maybe two? Or would that be three? Any way you look at it, the numbers were unsustainably low. Quail had vanished entirely from the Presidio in 2008. The 2013 Christmas Bird Count found no quail in the city at all, down from an average of 118 in the CBC count circle in the 1980s.

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VOLUNTEER—FOR BIRD CONSERVATION AND FOR PERSONAL FULFILLMENT

BY CINDY MARGULIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am delighted to become the executive director of Golden Gate Audubon because the mission of this organization is incredibly important to me. I've been a longtime volunteer for GGAS—most recently, coordinating a team that monitored and advocated for a wintering flock of Western Snowy Plovers at Crown Beach in Alameda. I've also volunteered for many years with other Bay Area conservation groups, including the Oakland Zoo, International Bird Rescue, San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, and East Bay Regional Park District.

Professionally, I've devoted my career

to cultivating strategic alliances in both the commercial and the nonprofit sectors. I know from experience that the greatest results come from collaboration. We at GGAS have tremendous potential to deepen our impact locally by growing our network of partnerships.

To save birds, we need to inspire an appreciation for wildlife in our fellow Bay Area residents and get them involved in conservation. It takes a lot of passion, time, and talented people to yield results from conservation, community-based advocacy, and environmental education. These are the three interlocking gears of Golden Gate

Audubon's work, the mechanism propelling our success. We don't just advocate for ecological stewardship; we make it happen. Our habitat restoration projects at Pier 94 in San Francisco and Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline in Oakland are prime examples. Meanwhile, we nurture environmental consciousness through vibrant programs such as bird walks, classes, lecture series, restoration work parties, and—of course—our award-winning Eco-Education program.

Golden Gate Audubon can take pride in being a major player when it comes to generating environmental engagement and real conservation in the Bay Area. Although GGAS has been going hard at this work for nearly a century, our mission has never been more relevant nor more urgent than it is today.

The ambitious scope of our mission means there are many opportunities for people to make a meaningful contribution. We need folks with planning skills to help with events, and folks with teaching and “people” skills in our docent programs. Do you have a knack for public speaking? Get involved with our political advocacy. Or are you a bird-loving shutterbug? Share your photos in our publications. If you speak a second language, you can help us reach out to new constituencies. Or if you simply have a few free hours on weekdays, you can assist in our office.

In my own life, I've found immense fulfillment, and many dear friends, from years of volunteering. I invite you to do the same. If you care about conserving birds in the Bay Area, we've got a volunteer gig for you!

NEWS BRIEFS

Bird the World with GGAS

Reserve a space on one of our amazing birding trips in 2014–2015 to Panama, Colombia, Newfoundland, Alaska, Texas, Oregon, or Arizona. Travel with GGAS brings you the best naturalist guides plus worry-free logistics. A complete trip list will be posted in mid-July at goldengateaudubon.org/travel.

GGAS Board Transitions

A big thank-you to retiring board members Carey Knecht, Jack Laws, Mike Lozeau, and Phil Price. Meanwhile, we welcome Bill Hudson to the board. Bill worked with GGAS in the successful fight to preserve 1,300 acres of open space in Orinda's Gateway Valley.

Burrowing Owl Docent Training

Share the wonder of the Burrowing Owls of Berkeley! Become one of our Burrowing Owl docents for the winter owl season. The next training is on September 27 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. No experience needed. For details, see the Volunteer page of our website.

The Year at Pier 94

Since July 2013, 245 GGAS volunteers have planted 2,000 native plants at Pier 94, the former dump site on Port of San Francisco land that we are restoring as bird habitat. We removed 26 cubic yards of non-native weeds and 10 bags of trash/recyclables!



(Left) UC Berkeley team on the campus near the campanile; (above) Chris and Gary Bard's Alameda Birdathon team.

Ilana DeBare

Peter Maiden/Maidenfoto

BIRDATHON 2014— MUCH MORE THAN NUMBERS

**GGAS
celebrates
fundraising
milestones
and award
winners.**

It would be easy to tell the story of Birdathon 2014 in numbers: 21 field trips; 179 participants; 85 fundraisers; 647 donors; and over \$57,000 raised!

But there was so much more. The bittersweet thrill of viewing an extinct Ivory-billed Woodpecker during the Behind the Scenes at Cal Academy tour. The adrenaline of racing alongside UC Berkeley student birders to beat the Stanford birding team. (We tried valiantly but lost, 75 species to 64.) The many large and small sightings: California Condor at Pinnacles National Park, Northern Gannet at Alcatraz, Phainopepla along Mines Road, Western Wood-Pewee in Tilden Regional Park.

Then there was the great companionship on all those trips and also at the Birdathon Awards Celebration on May 18. More than a hundred Golden Gate Audubon supporters gathered at the spectacular hillside home of board member Alan Harper and Carol Baird to honor Birdathon winners and conservation leaders.

The 2014 Elsie Roemer Conservation Award went to Lisa Owens Viani for her leadership in the fight

against rodenticides. Lisa is a cofounder of Raptors Are the Solution (RATS), which has creatively pushed to ban anticoagulant rodenticides such as d-Con that cause secondary poisoning of hawks, coyotes, and other wildlife.

The 2014 Paul Covel Education Award went to Denise Wight for her work introducing countless Bay Area birders to the skills of identifying birdsong. Denise started teaching Birding by Ear classes for GGAS in 2006. Today, hundreds of birders thank her whenever they identify the “quick-three-beers” of an Olive-sided Flycatcher.

Prizes were given to Top Fundraisers: 1st place—Bonnie Ng and Paul Kramer (\$2,480); 2nd—Chris and Gary Bard (\$2,340); 3rd—Bob Lewis (\$2,000); 4th—Dan Harris (\$1,841, from 64 different donors!); 5th—Glen Tepke (\$1,790).

Best Bird went to Bruce Mast's team for a Black Vulture in Sonoma County.

Winners of Most Species in 24 Hours: 1st place—Bruce Mast's team in Sonoma, with 172 species; 2nd—Glen Tepke and the Dippers in Alameda County, with 132 species; 3rd place—Ivan Samuels's Miwok birding team in Bolinas, with 120 species.

Winners of Most Species in 6 Hours: 1st place—Glen Tepke and the Dippers in Oakland, with 117 species; 2nd—Bruce Mast's team in Sonoma, with 87 species; 3rd—Chris and Gary Bard's trip in Alameda, with 77 species.

The biggest winners of all? The beneficiaries of Birdathon 2014 fundraising—kids in our Eco-Education classes, wildlife that find refuge at our habitat restoration sites, and the birds whose lives are saved through GGAS conservation campaigns.

Thank you to everyone who helped make Birdathon 2014 a success!



Crimson-breasted Mountain-Tanager.

THE LOW-DOWN ON GETTING HIGH IN COLOMBIA

BOB LEWIS

LOCATION / DATE

San Francisco
Thursday, July 17
7 p.m. refreshments
7:30 p.m. program

Bob will present knockout images of birds seen during two trips to Colombia. One focus of these trips was hummingbirds, with the Bearded Helmetcrest being a primary target. Part of the challenge was its habitat, at higher than 13,000 feet in the Andes. Colombia has 147 hummingbird species. It also has more species of birds than any other country, with over 1,850. Bob's talk will include photographs of ovenbirds, tanagers, flycatchers, and other brightly colored denizens of the Colombian mountains. In addition to the Andes, he'll explore the unique mountain range in the northeast, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, which reaches 18,700 feet, the highest summit in Colombia. He'll take a brief side tour for a cup of Colombian coffee.

Bob Lewis is a birding instructor, bird photographer, and world traveler. He is a GGAS board member, the chair of the Adult Education Committee, and co-compiler of the Oakland CBC. He is also president of the Farallon Islands Foundation.

2014 GGAS ANNUAL MEETING

You Are Invited!

Golden Gate Audubon will hold our annual membership meeting on Thursday, July 17, at 6:30 p.m., immediately prior to the Speaker Series presentation in San Francisco. Meet our new Executive Director Cindy Margulis and learn about GGAS's recent activities and plans for the coming year. Share your ideas. And then stay for Bob Lewis's talk.

BIRDS AND COFFEE

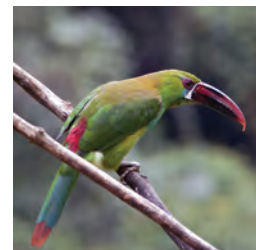
JOHN STERLING

LOCATION / DATE

Berkeley
Thursday, August 21
7 p.m. refreshments
7:30 p.m. program

John Sterling will present some of his Smithsonian research supporting the Bird-Friendly Coffee movement. He will discuss why some coffee farms are better than others for birds and why good coffee farms are critical for conservation. Illustrating his talk will be photos of birds from coffee farms in Latin America, the Philippines, and Sumatra.

John Sterling has been an active birder since 1971 and a wild-life biologist since 1981. He has traveled internationally as a guide and ornithologist. John's company (sterlingbirds.com) specializes in tours, classes, research, and environmental consulting.



Crimson-rumped Toucanet.

BIRDS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

GARY LANGHAM

LOCATION / DATE

San Francisco
Thursday, September 18
7 p.m. refreshments
7:30 p.m. program

Gary Langham will talk about the results of Audubon's recent comprehensive analysis modeling the winter and summer ranges of 588 North American bird species in response to future climate change. The fate of North America birds will depend on conservation decisions that reduce the impacts of climate change as well as the ability of these birds to colonize areas outside their current ranges.

Gary Langham is chief scientist at the National Audubon Society. He grew up in a birding family and started attending Audubon chapter meetings at age seven.



Burrowing Owl.

San Francisco: First Unitarian Universalist Church and Center, 1187 Franklin Street (at Geary). Directions: Visit www.uusf.org/visitors_faq.html, and use the Map It! link on the left.

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

CONTINUED from page 1

"It seems like only a matter of time before the city and state bird is extirpated from green, environmentally friendly San Francisco," wrote birder Dominik Mosur.

The decline of San Francisco's quail population has multiple causes, including depredation by feral cats and off-leash dogs. But it highlights the importance of maintaining habitat for wildlife in the city—and what is at stake if we lose that habitat.

Later this year, San Francisco officials will have an opportunity to help protect the city's remaining wildlife by approving a 20-year management plan for the city's Natural Areas Program.

Sounds like a no-brainer, right? The long-term plan—developed over a decade with input from a wide array of community groups—seeks to ensure suitable wildlife habitat while also providing access for people to hike and relax. But there are some potential rocks in the road:

Attacks on native plant restoration. The Natural Areas plan faces harsh attack by a vocal minority who oppose removal of any invasive, non-native plants such as eucalyptus and English ivy.

Sharp Park. Late in the process, the city inserted a separately planned controversial project at Sharp Park Golf Course that raises a number of environmental red flags. This project severely undermines the integrity of the overall plan and should be removed.



Farewell to spring (*Clarkia amoena*) at Bay View Hill.



Doug Washer

Savannah Sparrow.

Natural Areas are just tiny dots in the cityscape, but are precious oases for both people and wildlife.

At the center of this debate are 32 designated Natural Areas such as Mount Davidson, Lake Merced, and Glen Canyon Park. They are just tiny dots in the cityscape, three percent of all land in the city. But they are precious oases for both people and wildlife.

The Natural Areas Program (NAP) was launched in the late 1990s to help preserve these last remaining fragments of San Francisco's original habitats. Because NAP is staffed with just 10 employees, the city has partnered with volunteer groups like Sutro Stewards to improve trails and restore degraded habitat.

But the program also needed long-range direction, and so officials began creating the Significant Natural Resource Areas Management Plan in 2004.

The plan focuses on improving existing trails rather than adding new ones. Over a 20-year period, it would remove 3,400 invasive and non-native trees—just five percent of the Natural Area Program's 64,000 non-native trees—and replace them with native trees and plants.

This targeted tree removal would protect indigenous habitats such as chaparral

from further encroachment by eucalyptus. It would foster native plants that are vital to federally protected species such as the Mission Blue butterfly.

And it would be a boon for birds—the many species that need grasslands, oak woodlands, dunes, or wetlands, and cannot survive just on neatly trimmed ballfields or eucalyptus-and-ivy monoculture forests. Golden Gate Audubon has been part of the coalition of groups that worked with the city over the past decade to develop the Natural Areas Plan.

Now it's time for us to speak up even more strongly in regard to natural areas—to ensure that species like the Savannah Sparrow, Marsh Wren, and Spotted Towhee have the habitat they need to remain in San Francisco. If we don't make our voices heard, we will see more species following in the tracks of the unfortunate quail.

The Natural Areas plan is expected to go before city officials for approval sometime after the November elections. Email us at ggas@goldengateaudubon.org if you would like to get involved in speaking out for Natural Areas and wildlife in the city.

DONATIONS

Thank you all—both general donors and supporters of Birdathon 2014—for your generous commitment to Golden Gate Audubon's programs and to the protection of Bay Area wildlife!

Donations from March 1 to May 31, 2014

GOLDEN EAGLE (\$1,000 or more)

Chris & Gary Bard, Mary C. Betlach, Patricia Greene, Kimberly Jannarone, The March Foundation, Jay & Lisa Pierrepont, Diane Ross-Leech

PEREGRINE FALCON (\$500 to \$999)

Eleanor Briccetti, Pamela & Robert Clark, Jacqueline Craig, Alan Kaplan, Mary E. Martin, Ann Ruffer, Kuppe G. Shankar, Glen Tepke, Ruth Tobey, Paul J. Weaver

LEAST TERN (\$250 to \$499)

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Carla Din, a Birdathon celebration organizer, and Alan Harper, celebration host. Photo by Ilana DeBare



Best Bird winner Bruce Mast with celebration attendees Juliet Cox, Denise Wight (winner of the Paul Covel Education Award), and Dave Quady. Photo by Ilana DeBare



George Peyton and Chris Bard. Photo by Doug Mosher

GIFTS IN HONOR OF

Vern Bothwell, in honor of Dave Quady
Miya Lucas, in honor of Rusty Scalf
Richard Drury, in honor of Mike Lynes
Laura Gobbi, in honor of GGAS staff
David Snippen, in honor of Della Dash
John Colbert, in honor of Haas 2007
Elka Shockett, in honor of Bess Maltin

MEMORIAL GIFTS

Pat Cabrera, in memory of Maryle Eade
Lois Hirsch, in memory of Ethel Hirsch
Hanno Lewis, in memory of Jane Dang
James Lynes, in memory of Charles Lynes
Meghan Starkey, in memory of Maryle Eade

IN-KIND GIFTS

Kent Anderson, Birds & Beans, Cliff House, Connie Cloak & Chris Carrieri, Costanoa Lodge & Resort, Jacqueline Craig, Carla Din, Alan Harper & Carol Baird, Susan Greef, Bill Hudson, Alvaro Jaramillo, Maureen Lahiff, Linden Street Brewery, Monterey Seabirds, PetVet Petfood, Port of San Francisco, Phil Price, Recology, Heather Rosnow, Maria Mudd Ruth, Rusty Scalf, Sarah H. Toas, Sierra Hot Springs, Linda Vallee, Scott Whittle, Chris Witt

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Perforce Software, Inc. (Brian Holtcamp)
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The Clorox Company Foundation (Rachel Watson-Clark)
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The San Francisco Carbon Fund

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Copper Sponsors

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Hanson Aggregates
Recology



Rita Sklar, who exhibited her artwork at the Birdathon celebration. Photo by Ilana DeBare



The Skyline High School "jazz-tet" played for attendees. Photo by Ilana DeBare

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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 office).

The Gull is published four times per year. Special third-class postage paid in Oakland, CA. Send address changes to the office promptly. The post office does not forward *The Gull*.

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 The Gull is printed with soy-based inks on chlorine-free paper, 30% postconsumer waste content.

2 GGAS'S New Director

Meet Cindy Margulis, who joined GGAS in May, and read about her vision for Golden Gate Audubon.

3 Birdathon 2014

The most successful fundraiser to date raises more than \$57,000 and attracts nearly 200 participants.

4 Summer Speaker Series

Coming up, June–August: birds of the Colombian Andes, bird-friendly coffee, future of birds and climate change.

BACKYARD BIRDER



Bob Lewis/flickr.com/boblewis

Juvenile night-herons.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS

BY ILANA DEBARE

Black-crowned Night-Herons made the national news in May when a tree trimmer decimated a downtown Oakland rookery. Local volunteers helped rescue five fledglings, which were released at Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline in June.

But what were night-herons doing in the middle of downtown to begin with?

The most numerous heron in North America, Black-crowned

Night-Herons favor remote nesting spots like predator-free islands. But their diet is flexible enough to accommodate urban trash as well as fish and invertebrates. They've been known to forage in the parking lot of the Kentucky Fried Chicken near Lake Merritt.

"They do often nest in urban and suburban areas, but that doesn't mean those are good places for them," says John Kelly, director of conservation science at Audubon Canyon Ranch.

Black-crowned Night-Herons sometimes share a rookery with other herons—and are rookery pioneers. "When new colonies form, it's often the night-herons that start them," says Kelly. "Then Snowy Egrets show up. Then after a number of years, you get Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets. When herons see another heron or egret nesting, their hormones start to go, even if it's not the same species."

Night-herons' nocturnal feeding allows them to minimize competition with other heron species for prey. They are more sensitive to nest disturbance than other herons. "If you walk up to a mixed nesting colony, they'll be the first to flush," Kelly says.

Juvenile night-herons sport streaky brown plumage through their first year. They enter a dusky phase in year two, when they gain the black crown, but their underparts are gray rather than the adult white. Adult males and females look the same, although the male is likely to have longer nuptial plumes, the long whip-like white feathers extending back from the head.

"The nuptial plumes are part of their basic plumage, not breeding plumage, but they become conspicuous in nesting season," Kelly says. "The longer the nuptial feathers, the more likely the male will get a mate."

Key steps to support night-herons? Protect nesting colonies like the one in Oakland. And preserve the coastal wetlands and salt marshes they rely on for food.