

THE GULL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY // VOL. 103 NO. 1 WINTER 2019



ALAMEDA ADOPTS BIRD-SAFETY

BY ILANA DEBARE

The island of Alameda offers a wealth of essential resources for birds—sandy beaches, rich tidal marshes, nesting and roosting sites, and productive fishing waters. Now, thanks to two years of work by Golden Gate Audubon Society, it will offer protection against window collisions too. The Alameda City Council voted unanimously on November 2018 for a citywide Bird-Safe Building Ordinance, becoming the fourth city in the central Bay Area to adopt such guidelines.

CONTINUED on page 3

Black Phoebe.
Bob Gunderson





Jerry Ting

House Finches.

OUR BIRD PEOPLE WORK IN CLEVER WAYS

BY CINDY MARGULIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Often when people hear that we're from Golden Gate Audubon, they say, "OH! YOU're the bird people!" I always smile indulgently but wonder to myself about when that person will become a bird person, too.

The truth is that, of course, we ARE the bird people. But our mission is more challenging. We've got to make more of our neighbors into bird people, too. Well, perhaps not transform them into birding diehards that will trek up and down muddy

trails from pre-dawn to dusk to count every possible bird on a CBC transect in the coldest, wettest season, but to spark every person to realize that birds are worth noticing and valuing.

The explicit mission of Golden Gate Audubon is to engage people to experience the wonder of birds so we can translate their wonder into actions that benefit native birds and their habitats. The love for birds is spread by connecting people to the birds.

When we show others the beauty of birds, they have the opportunity to share

our vision for both the birds and for conservation. That is why GGAS provided more than 189 birding trips (vast majority for free!) in the last fiscal year: to enable so many to observe the myriad birds that share our local community landscapes.

Sometimes, we have to pique the curiosity of strangers, like when our docent programs show passersby their very first Burrowing Owl, or position a spotting scope on a displaying Cormorant couple at Lake Merritt. These passive, but surprising and memorable encounters plant the seed in people's minds that birds might just be worth a closer look.

And speaking of planting, another way we engage people is by inviting them to restore habitat with us. Sometimes, it takes getting a little dirty to become a bird lover! When people participate in making a shoreline cleaner and safer for wildlife, they realize that those parklands are thereby improved for humans, too. And it's much easier to notice birds' behavior when trash isn't despoiling a place. It's especially rewarding to observe a bird making use of a native plant that you put in the ground with your own hands. That feels good.

At other times, we simply have to speak out, and up, from our hearts in favor of the birds. Such advocacy is highlighted in this issue: how our activists won a unanimous decision to prioritize the welfare of birds in Alameda.

Now we definitely know, we're not the only people who care about birds! Come on out and help us spread more bird love in the New Year!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Martin Luther King Jr Day Event

MLK Jr Shoreline Park
Oakland

January 21, 9 a.m. – noon

Join Golden Gate Audubon in celebrating MLK Jr. Day at MLK Jr. Shoreline Park with a morning of habitat restoration and shoreline cleanup. Drop-in program—no need to RSVP. Bring your own garden gloves and water bottle.

San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival

Mare Island
Vallejo

February 8 – 10

Annual celebration of the migration through San Francisco Bay of more than 1 million shorebirds and hundreds of thousands of ducks, geese, hawks, and other wildlife at the peak of migration. For more information go to www.sfbayflywayfestival.com

Great Backyard Bird Count

February 15 – 18

A free, fun event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or longer) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings. For more information go to gbbc.birdcount.org

ALAMEDA CONTINUED from page 1

The new Alameda law addresses bird safety on two fronts. One focuses on preventing window strikes, which kill as many as one billion birds across the U.S. each year. The other focuses on exterior night lighting, which can draw migrating birds off course and disrupt birds' feeding and nesting schedules.

The Alameda ordinance grew out of GGAS's work with other local cities. GGAS won approval of bird-safe building standards in San Francisco in 2011, followed by Oakland in 2013 and Richmond in 2016.

"Alameda has such a long coastline, and there is so much development happening right along the edge of the island, that it presents a very high risk of bird-building collisions," said Linda Carloni, GGAS Board President Alameda resident, and co-chair of GGAS subcommittee Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Reserve (FAWR), the group that spearheaded the effort.

Carloni and FAWR activists started by meeting individually with each city councilor, personally explaining the rationale for bird-safety in Alameda. When the council referred the issue to its planning staff, GGAS provided background and guidance to city planners.

"Collisions with glass are the second biggest cause of death to birds in the U.S.," GGAS member Dawn Lemoine told the council in public testimony before its November vote. "Let's challenge the architects of Alameda's next developments to create beautiful alternatives to large expanses of clear glass."



Jerry Ting

Fledgling Least Tern.



Gail West

Yellow-rumped Warbler.

This ordinance is a statement that as the city grows, it's going to continue to cherish the birds of our island community.

The Alameda ordinance applies to new construction and when replacing windows on buildings that are taller than 35 feet (about three or four stories) and that have a façade of at least 50 percent glass.

Windows on such a façade that are larger than 12 square feet must include measures to make the glass visible to birds. Builders can choose from a wide variety of deterrents including UV-coated glass, patterned or fritted glass, window treatments such as louvered blinds, awnings, decals, and external insect screens. (Historic structures and storefront windows are exempt.)

"If they use UV-coated glass with patterns in UV that birds (but not necessarily humans) can discern, the windows are also more energy-efficient," said GGAS Executive Director Cindy Margulis. "So bird-safe building coincides beautifully with the movement for green buildings and lowering the carbon footprint in our cities."

The lighting guidelines—called the Alameda Dark Skies Ordinance—aim at reducing artificial outdoor light that can harm birds as well as humans. They prohibit certain intense forms of light such as searchlights and aerial lasers during migration season, and require other outdoor lighting to be shielded and pointed downwards.

Alameda's bird-safe building guidelines are particularly timely because significant development is planned for the former naval air station at the northern tip of the island, which is also home to the most consistently productive nesting colony of endangered California Least Terns in the state.

In 2014, after decades of advocacy, GGAS won creation of a 500-acre wildlife reserve that includes the tern colony. Over 200 bird species have been reported there. Other at-risk species in Alameda include Western Snowy Plovers, listed as federally threatened, and Burrowing Owls, which are a species of special concern.

"This ordinance is a statement that as the city grows, it's going to continue to cherish the birds of our island community," said Margulis.

The ordinance was also a testament to the determination of GGAS volunteers and staff.

"It was really a team effort, from Noreen Weeden's expertise on bird-safe buildings to volunteers like Linda Carloni, Leora Feeney, and Marjorie Powell," Margulis said. "There were city meetings that literally went on until 1:30 a.m. We had volunteers giving testimony at 1:30 a.m."

BIRDATHON IS BACK!—AND IT'S BIGGER THAN EVER!



Back by popular demand, Golden Gate Audubon will be hosting Birdathon 2019 this spring. Don't miss this opportunity to experience one-of-a-kind birding trips, contribute to the financial support of GGAS, and spread the word to friends and family about the vital work we do!

Birdathon will be bigger and better this year! To accommodate even more popular trips, we'll be starting March 22nd, 2019 and will schedule trips through May 17th. You will also have the opportunity to bid online for unique, private experiences like a Falconry Demonstration for a group of four, or Birding by Air in a private plane!

Golden Gate Audubon field trips are free during most of the year. But because Birdathon is our main fundraiser, we ask everyone joining a Birdathon trip to become a peer fundraiser and/or to make a personal donation.

Why fundraise rather than just donate? It's the magical multiplier effect. If 200 people each donate \$50 to go on a trip, it generates \$10,000. But if those same 200 people each raise \$500 from family and friends...Golden Gate Audubon receives \$100,000 to protect Bay Area birds! And top fundraisers will win great prizes like weekend getaways to top birding spots. We will happily provide tips and one-to-one support to help you fundraise.

Visit our web site at goldengateaudubon.org/birdathon2019 and watch for details on trip descriptions and minimum donation amounts, registrations, peer fundraising pages, links to the online auction, and prizes for top fundraisers. Registration opens February 1st. Mark your calendars now!



Please Thank Our Birdathon 2019 Corporate Sponsors



Top Fundraisers Can Win These and Other Great Prizes!

Prize for the Top First-time Birdathon Fundraiser! This year's top first-time fundraiser will win a Pentax 10x43 binoculars donated by Out of this World Optics.



Two Nights at the Jenner Inn

The historic Jenner Inn offers a spectacular opportunity to enjoy the unique beauty of the Sonoma Coast. The four acres of land are being augmented with bird feeders, native berry-producing plants, and other natural vegetation to encourage bird populations. Stroll the beaches, hike nearby trails, head down to Bodega Bay for more birding, or enjoy the wineries and restaurants of the Russian River.



Two Nights at Sierra Hot Springs

Renew and energize yourself after a day of Sierra birding in the tranquil waters of Sierra Hot Springs. For almost 150 years, this land has hosted popular hot springs resorts. Spend two relaxing weeknights at the resort, about 30 miles north of Truckee in Sierraville, and enjoy the birds of the Sierra! Prize includes a month-long membership to the resort.



One Night at the Howard Creek Ranch Inn

Howard Creek Ranch Inn is an historic 60-acre oceanfront farm bordered by miles of beach and mountains on the beautiful Mendocino Coast. Enjoy the award-winning gardens, fireplaces/wood stoves, a 75-foot swinging foot bridge over Howard Creek, hot tubs, sauna, and a hearty hot farm breakfast.

Birdathon Celebrations

You won't want to miss these celebrations when Birdathon 2019 comes to a close.

Flights of Fancy: A Musical Celebration of Birds

Saturday, May 18, 7:30 pm

Venue TBD

\$20 minimum donation

Berkeley's Gallimaufry Chamber Chorus presents this concert as a benefit for GGAS with bird-themed music from the Middle Ages & the Renaissance, as well as traditional songs and ballads. Directed by Shira Kammen, this 22+ voice choir will be joined by local musicians Letitia Berlin and Frances Blaker.

Birdathon Garden Party and Awards Celebration

Sunday, May 19

Private venue

\$20 minimum ticket price

Join us for our fun-filled Birdathon 2019 Awards Celebration. Mingle with birding friends, share Birdathon stories, and enjoy boutique wines and gourmet appetizers at a stunning Oakland Hills home surrounded by dramatic views of Chabot Regional Park. And of course find out the grand prize winners of Birdathon 2019.



Birdathon 2019 Field Trips

March 22 thru March 24: Greater Sage Grouse in Lassen County with Dave Quady

March 23: Raptors at Skaggs Island with Anne Ardillo and George Eade

March 24: Behind the Scenes at the Oakland Zoo with Leslie Storer, Tom & Diane Bennet

March 30: Birds and Chocolate at Elsie Roemer with Joyce Mercado & Sharol Nelson-Embry

March 31: Birds! Camera! Action! – East Bay Photo Day with Glen Tepke

April 6: Birding San Francisco with Murphy's MOB (Multiple Observers) with Dan & Joan Murphy

April 6: California Condors at the Pinnacles with Rusty Scalf & Richard Neidhardt

April 8: Grasshopper Sparrows at Garin Regional Park with Wendy Beers & Miya Lucas

April 9: Elkhorn Slough Safari with Bob Lewis

April 13: Best of the Presidio with Alan Hopkins

April 13: Birding the Peninsula with Dan & Joan Murphy

April 14: Birds and Wine Tasting in Napa with Bruce Mast

April 14: Birding at Valle Vista with Clayton Anderson

April 20: Santa Cruz Mountains Highland Specialties with Ryan Phillips

April 20: Schooner Sail to Pt. Bonita with Tony Brake & Yvonne McHugh

April 20: South Bay Salt Ponds with Dominik Mosur

April 26: Mines Road with Steve & Carol Lombardi

April 27 (2nd trip April 28): Spring Birding at Point Reyes with Rusty Scalf

April 27: Napa River with Dolphin Charters with Bob Lewis

April 27: Behind-the-Scenes Tour of Corvid Connection with Cindy Margulis

April 28: The Magic of Mitchell Canyon with Maureen Lahiff

May 1: Behind the Scenes at UCB Dept. of Zoology with Carla Cicero & Allen Fish

May 4: Behind the Gates at Hayward Shoreline with Bob Lewis

May 5: Birding By Ear – Dawn Chorus with Denise Wight

May 5: Birding By Ear – Mid-morning with Denise Wight

May 10: Return to Inspiration Point with Alan Kaplan

May 14 thru May 17: The Tule Transect with Gary Adest & Joan Parker

TBD: Behind the Scenes at the California Academy with Jack Dumbacher

TBD: Petaluma River with Dolphin Charters

Visit goldengateaudubon.org/birdathon2019 for more details.



James Scott

Tricolored Blackbird.

AUDUBON CALIFORNIA—TRICOLORED BLACKBIRD

SAMANTHA ARTHUR

LOCATION / DATE

Berkeley
 Thursday, January 17
 6:30 p.m. refreshments,
 7 p.m. program

The Tricolored Blackbird is a colonial breeder that is nearly endemic to California. Historically, these birds bred on wetlands in the Central Valley. As a result of the loss of 90 percent of the wetlands, Tricolors increasingly nest in agricultural fields. When nesting and farmers' harvest schedules conflict, high proportions of the Tricolor population are put at risk. Tricolored Blackbirds were listed as a threatened species under the California Endangered Species Act in April 2018 due to sharp, ongoing population declines. In this presentation Conservation Project Director, Samantha Arthur, will discuss Audubon California's multi-pronged approach to save the Tricolored Blackbird. This approach includes creating new wetland habitat, working with dairy farmers to delay harvest until after chicks have fledged from nests, and advocating for protections under the state and federal Endangered Species Acts.

Samantha Arthur is a Conservation Project Director for Audubon California, focusing on improving wetlands management for the benefit of bird species in the Central Valley. She also manages Audubon California's campaign to save the Tricolored Blackbird.

San Francisco: New venue! Sports Basement, 1590 Bryant Street, San Francisco.

Berkeley: Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda (between Solano and Marin). Directions: Visit northbrae.org/contact--find-us.html.

INNOVATIVE HABITAT ENHANCEMENT FOR BIRDS

LOCATION / DATE

San Francisco
 Thursday, February 21
 6:30 p.m. refreshments,
 7 p.m. program

MIKE PERLMUTTER

Please note new San Francisco venue at Sports Basement, 1590 Bryant Street.



Since 1997 Golden Gate Audubon has partnered with the Port of San Francisco to enhance shoreline wildlife habitat at Pier 94, located along the southeastern Bay shoreline, on property owned and operated by the Port of San Francisco. After completing successful wetland and beach enhancement projects Golden Gate Audubon initiated habitat enhancements in the adjacent upland areas of Pier 94. Through creative partnerships and modest funding, Golden Gate Audubon mobilized materials, equipment, and people to transform a mostly barren area of shoreline rubble and road into a viable place for native plants and wildlife. This project is a model for beneficial sediment reuse - using clean local "waste" sediment from mining, dredging, and excavation projects for habitat enhancement rather than disposal.

Mike Perlmutter is the Environmental Stewardship Team Supervisor for the City of Oakland Public Works Environmental Services Division. Mike has worked in San Francisco Bay Area environmental conservation since 1998.

NEW PROGRAMS AT ROTARY NATURE CENTER, LAKE MERRITT

Golden Gate Audubon is proud to announce that we will be offering brand new programs at the renovated Rotary Nature Center at Lake Merritt beginning in January 2019. Taught by Clayton Anderson, first quarter classes will be *Introduction to the Wintering Birds of Lake Merritt*, *Bird as Icon in Nature & Culture: Black-crowned Night-Heron*, *Nature Journaling in the Heart of Oakland*, and *Discover Nesting Colonial Water Birds in Oakland*. For information and registration go to goldengateaudubon.org/education/classes-rnc/



Lindsay Kernodle

DONATIONS

Thank you for joining our donor community.

Donations from September 1, 2018 – November 30, 2018

With gratitude to every individual, business, and organization who made a recent donation. Large or small, the gifts you send support our conservation, education and member programs, and directly benefit the birds you love.

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David Ezra, Diane Joy, Out of This World Optics, Dan J. Richman, Rusty Scalf, Sierra Hot Springs, Jan Sutter

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JOIN GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON FOR 2019!

If you haven't yet joined or renewed your Golden Gate Audubon Society membership for 2019, now is the time! Members enjoy discounts on birding classes, speaker events, pelagic trips, and merchandise, as well as subscriptions to *The Gull* and our e-newsletters.

Although GGAS is a chapter of National Audubon, we are an independent nonprofit that must raise all its own funds. We rely on member support to continue our vital conservation and environmental education work.

Don't miss out! Support bird conservation in the Bay Area by renewing or joining today. Please renew securely online at goldengateaudubon.org/join or call (510) 843-2222.



Joe Galkowski

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MISSION STATEMENT

Golden Gate Audubon engages people to experience the wonder of birds and to translate that wonder into actions which protect native bird populations and their habitats.

ABOUT GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON

The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 25, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. However, GGAS receives no portion of dues from National Audubon. Golden Gate Audubon Supporting Membership is \$35 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office.

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Learn about upcoming Golden Gate Audubon events every month! Send your name and email address to ggas@goldengateaudubon.org to receive our monthly e-newsletters with upcoming events and other news.

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2 Bird People Work in Clever Ways

GGAS members rise to the challenge of engaging people to experience the wonder of birds.

4 Birdathon is Back!

Back by popular demand, Golden Gate Audubon will be hosting Birdathon 2019 this spring.

6 Speaker Series

San Francisco Speaker Series is moving venues. The new venue is the Sports Basement on Bryant Street in San Francisco.

BACKYARD BIRDER



Bob Gunderson

Anna's Hummingbird.

THE HUMANITY OF HUMMINGBIRDS

BY TAYLOR CRISOLOGO

Many times, I've walked along a Bay Area trail, stopping along the side to watch a bird for a few minutes. Often, curious passersby will also stop and ask about the spectacle.

In moments such as these, I've picked up on a bird's ability to bring strangers together in common humanity: a moment, however brief, spent watching and wondering in nature. The source of such encounters has often been the Anna's Hummingbird. Naturally, they steal the attention of any birder or casual observer with their jewel-like colors, boisterous vocalizations, and quick maneuverability.

Anna's Hummingbirds are permanent residents along the West Coast of the United States, meaning that our winters in the Bay

Area are made that much brighter by Anna's Hummingbirds. They are also the most common hummingbird on the West Coast—making them a universal part of the Bay Area birding experience.

Rain brings more hummingbird food, namely nectar-producing plants and insects. Thus, Anna's Hummingbirds will breed in the winter and early spring to time their nesting season with the rainy season in California. This makes them California's true winter birds—some individuals have even been recorded breeding in the Bay Area during the Audubon Society's annual Christmas Bird Count.

The Golden Gate Audubon Society's award-winning Eco-Education Program has actively been working to connect Bay Area kids to the magic of hummingbirds. The program, offered year-round, provides environmental education through hands-on lessons, including a series of field trips for under-served Title 1 elementary school classes in Oakland, Richmond, and San Francisco.

One Eco-Ed lesson aims to familiarize students with our local hummingbirds. Students learn about hummingbirds through presentations, then work to make their own schools more hummingbird-friendly by planting appropriate flora such as California fuchsia (*Epilobium sp.*) and California lilac (*Ceanothus sp.*) on school grounds.

To see more of these vibrant birds in your own backyard, plant hummingbird-friendly native flora, like California fuchsia, gooseberries (*Ribes sp.*), monkey flower (*Mimulus sp.*), wild rose (*Rosa sp.*) and sage (*Salvia sp.*), or install hummingbird feeders. To create your own hummingbird food for feeders, mix 1 part sugar dissolved in 4 parts water—be sure to clean feeders regularly to prevent bacteria and other problems. Chances are that you'll soon have bright and busy visitors, and endless opportunity to watch this interesting and iconic species!