

THE GULL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY // VOL. 101 NO. 4 FALL 2017



PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PRESIDIO

BY ILANA DEBARE

Alan Hopkins remembers birding at the Presidio of San Francisco in the 1970s when it was still an active military base. “You had to sneak around, especially if you had binoculars,” he recalled. Today, as part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the Presidio is far more welcoming to birdwatchers and other nature lovers. But Golden Gate Audubon Society’s involvement with the Presidio began even before it became a national park.

CONTINUED on page 5

Red-shouldered Hawk
at the Presidio
David Assmann





Ilana DeBare

Volunteer artists depicted Birds of the Presidio in chalk as part of our Centennial.

THE GIFTS OF VOLUNTEERS

BY CINDY MARGULIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Have you had a chance yet to see how we've honored our 100 years of protecting Bay Area birds? Golden Gate Audubon Society's popular Centennial Exhibit has been migrating around the Bay, hosted already this year at four public sites: the California State Building in San Francisco, Tilden Park's Environmental Education Center in Berkeley, Oakland's City Hall complex, and the Tides Thoreau Center in the Presidio.

From October through December, our Centennial will be featured at Lindsay Wildlife Experience in Walnut Creek. Not only does the exhibit highlight the accomplishments of our terrific volunteers, it is

even being transported and installed by a cadre of these can-do folks!

Our amazing array of volunteers is what makes GGAS so special. Dedicated volunteers help us monitor and advocate for wildlife and habitat protections. They also serve on our Board and our three active conservation committees.

Who provides the hands for all of our hands-on conservation—including the habitat enhancement and restoration projects we initiated and manage at eight different public lands around the Bay? Hundreds of *handy* volunteers!

Volunteers are also crucial to our signature Eco-Education STEM science program

that empowers youth from the Bay Area's most under-served schools to become ecological stewards of our watersheds and their own schoolyards.

Our docent programs, focused on Birds of Lake Merritt, Birding the Bay Trail, and Burrowing Owls, are all fully powered by volunteers.

Who leads our 165+ free field trips each year? Knowledgeable volunteers! Who conducts those extensive Christmas Bird Counts every December in Oakland and San Francisco? Yep, marvelous volunteers!

And how best to focus the public's attention on local bird life? Well, we need volunteer artists and photographers to show people how and where to look!

Volunteers inspire us. They're the reservoir of energy that sustains our work. It's such a privilege to collaborate with so many smart and talented individuals, each of whom lends us their valuable skills *pro bono*. The multi-faceted work of Golden Gate Audubon enables us to leverage everybody's talents and expertise, whether they are teachers, lawyers, gardeners, architects, writers, photographers, scientists, artists, organizers, sparkling personalities...or all of the above. I believe adamantly that doing wildlife conservation in an urban context challenges us to apply everyone's gifts most purposefully.

Our mission is to connect people to the wonder of birds and translate that wonder into action that protects wildlife and habitats. So...if we can be as clever and resourceful as a Common Raven, we'll be worthy of such astounding volunteers!

NEWS BRIEFS

2017 Oakland Heron Rescues

Eighty-one young Black-crowned Night-Herons and Snowy Egrets were rescued from downtown Oakland streets during the 2017 breeding season, thanks to the three-way partnership we organized with Oakland Zoo and International Bird Rescue. Fifty of those birds were successfully rehabilitated and released into safer habitat.

Osprey Nest Cam—A Great First Year

Over 68,000 people have viewed our live Osprey nest cam since its launch last March along the Richmond shoreline. The website—sfbayospreys.org—drew 600,000 page views, and educators from 11 communities downloaded free lesson plans. Next year's nesting season will start in early March.

Help Extend Our Centennial Celebration

Our traveling Centennial exhibit has received such rave reviews that we hope to extend it into 2018 and 2019. Do you know of a venue such as a community center or office building lobby that might be a good site? Email us at ggas@goldengateaudubon.org. We want to hear from you!

More Bird News on Our Blog

Subscribe to our blog for weekly news about Bay Area birds and GGAS activities. See goldengateaudubon.org/blog, then click the blue "follow" button to receive posts via email. Recent topics include a history of the Farallones and using a tiny digital camera to monitor nest boxes.



(From left) Elegant Terns at Crissy Field; hiking the Batteries to Bluffs trail. Photos by Alan Hopkins.

PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO: BIRDING HOTSPOT

BY ALAN HOPKINS

LOCATION

Presidio
San Francisco

Enormous efforts have been made to restore the natural habitat.

With more than 200 bird species, the Presidio is beloved by Bay Area birdwatchers. The area has diverse habitats: ocean, bay, marsh, riparian, woodland, and more.

Founded in 1776 as a Spanish military installation, the 1,491-acre base became part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in 1994. Like some other military bases, large tracts were left undeveloped and so remnants of San Francisco's original flora and fauna can still be found.

Since the Presidio became a national park, enormous efforts have been made to restore its natural habitat. Crissy Field—formerly an asphalt lot surrounded by a cyclone fence—today offers a thriving lagoon. El Polin Spring—once a quaint picnic area on the edge of a landfill—now hosts native plants, butterflies, and birds. Highlights include:

Northern coastline. The Golden Gate Promenade offers spectacular views. Look for Pigeon Guillemots nesting in Fort Scott's gun turrets in the summer. Murres and cormorants pass beneath the bridge, and wintering Western Grebes are just offshore.

The beach east of the Gulf of the Farallones Visitor Center is protected for wintering Snowy Plovers. The lawn at Crissy Field can have swallows and goldfinches in the summer. Crissy Marsh is more a lagoon than a marsh, with egrets, ducks, and shorebirds.

Western Bluffs and shore. Battery Godfrey, across from the Golden Gate Overlook, offers views of oystercatchers, turnstones and Surfbirds on the rocks below. In hot weather it's a great migration site where you can spot flocks of tanagers and kingbirds. Any migrating bird is possible, but be quick with the optics because few birds actually stop.

Mountain Lake. Years of extensive restoration have paid off with nesting Red-winged Blackbirds in the tules, and Ruddy Ducks and Pied-billed Grebes along the edges. The new East Arm of the lake has had Blue-winged Teal.

Tennessee Hollow. The most exciting project in the park, Tennessee Hollow had tons of fill and conduit removed to daylight its stream. I often hike from the top to the bottom, passing El Polin Spring, and finding Nuttall's Woodpeckers, orioles, sapsuckers, and warblers. In the future, the trail will continue to a new wetland at Crissy Field.

These mentions barely scratch the surface of birding at the Presidio. For more detail, see goldengateaudubon.org/blog-posts/presidio-birding-hotspot. As its restored habitats mature, the Presidio will offer even more treasures for bird and nature lovers.

Have a favorite birding site you'd like to share? Contact idebare@goldengateaudubon.org.

SEE THE BIRDS OF THE WORLD IN 2018!

Golden Gate Audubon Society is offering an exciting array of guided birding tours in 2018, from Willow Ptarmigans in Alaska to Black-eared Fairy Hummingbirds in Peru. Our trips are carefully chosen to offer world-class birding destinations, expert birding guides, comfortable lodging, seamless logistics, and great companionship. Plus each trip helps support our conservation and environmental education programs!

Destinations in 2018 include Baja California (birding and a close encounter with grey whales), Denali and Glacier National Parks in Alaska, Peru (from the rainforest to the Andes, including Machu Picchu), Costa Rica, Oaxaca, South Texas for spring migration, and Southern Oregon. Visit goldengateaudubon.org/travel for details. For a complete itinerary, contact our volunteer Travel Coordinators Pat (patkirkpatrick14@gmail.com) or Rubi (rabrams2@pacbell.net).



(From left) Alaska Range (courtesy Paxson Woelber); grey whale encounter in Baja (courtesy Juan-Carlos Solis); Scarlet Macaws in Peru (courtesy Pelin Karaca).

THE NEXT CENTURY OF BAY AREA CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP

As we wrap up our 2017 Centennial year, we hope you've had a chance to enjoy the traveling exhibit on 100 Years of Protecting Bay Area Birds. Now we're turning our gaze to the next 100 years of inspiring people to protect the birds we all love.

There is a big, critically important way you can help—by including Golden Gate Audubon Society in your estate planning.

Legacy gifts helped us achieve numerous conservation victories during our first 100 years, from acquiring Point Pinole as parkland to reducing raptor mortality at Altamont Pass, and creating a permanent wildlife reserve at Alameda Point. Legacy gifts are a way to make a difference for wildlife even after you're gone. They ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy the Bay Area birds and landscapes you love.

Our Leaving a Legacy for Conservation brochure explains some of your planned giving options. You can download it at goldengateaudubon.org/legacy or call us at (510) 843-2222 to receive a copy by mail.

Call us if you want more information. And please let us know if you do include GGAS in your estate planning; We'd like to thank you at some of our special events for legacy donors.

UPCOMING EVENTS

2017 Christmas Bird Counts

Oakland and San Francisco
December 17 and 27

Mark your calendar now for our Oakland CBC on December 17 and our San Francisco CBC on December 27, each followed by the traditional festive count dinner. All skill levels welcome. We warmly invite new Feeder Watchers to take part! Registration will open in late October; see our website then for details.

Centennial Exhibit at Lindsay Wildlife Experience

1931 First Avenue, Walnut Creek
October, 3, 2017 through January 2, 2018
Last chance to view our traveling Centennial exhibit in 2017! See stunning images of birds and GGAS history at Lindsay Wildlife Experience, open Wednesdays through Sundays. Join us for a members-only reception on Sunday, October 15. For details, email ggas@goldengateaudubon.org.

Restore habitat for wildlife

Multiple locations
Multiple dates

We mobilize 2,500 volunteers each year to restore habitat at sites in San Francisco, Oakland, Richmond, and Alameda. You could be one of them! These are fun and fulfilling events for all ages, and we always include a little birding. No experience needed. See goldengateaudubon.org/ volunteer for a restoration event near you.



From left: GGAS volunteers restore Presidio habitat in the early 2000s (courtesy Presidio Trust); this Snowy Plover was rescued and banded after the Cosco Busan oil spill in 2008, then spotted at Crissy Field in 2015 (courtesy Bob Gunderson).

PRESIDIO CONTINUED from page 1

As part of GGAS's year-long Centennial celebration, we're highlighting our long connection to this treasured place.

First Western Snowy Plover

To see the longstanding importance of the Presidio area as wildlife habitat, look no further than a 1.5-ounce threatened shorebird. The type specimen for the Western Snowy Plover was collected at the Presidio in 1854 by Lt. Col. William Trowbridge, the army engineer who built the Golden Gate Tidal Gauge.

In the 20th century, while the Presidio was still a military base, GGAS offered field trips there led by Mary Lousie Rosegay, one of the first women to graduate in ornithology from Cornell. Living on the base and then nearby, Rosegay developed a bird list for the Presidio and advocated for its wildlife.

"I remember seeing my life Red Crossbill on one of Mary Louise's field trips to Mountain Lake," said Hopkins, a longtime GGAS volunteer and former Board President.

Becoming a National Park

The Presidio's profile as a birding site started rising when GGAS revived its San Francisco Christmas Bird Count in 1983 and included the Presidio. For more than a dozen years, GGAS has partnered with the Presidio Trust to hold the CBC tally dinner at the Presidio Log Cabin.

Our involvement accelerated with the

The Presidio's profile as a birding site started rising when GGAS revived its San Francisco Christmas Bird Count in 1983 and included the Presidio.

Presidio's transfer in 1994 to the National Park Service. GGAS organized a multi-year series of bird censuses to document and inform management of the Presidio's avian inhabitants. GGAS weighed in with thoughtful, well-documented comments on land management issues, including the future of Crissy Field.

It's partly due to advocacy by GGAS that the Presidio created Crissy Lagoon—now a thriving wetland hosting herons, waterfowl, and shorebirds—on land that was formerly military buildings.

"There were lots of meetings, lots of people who thought it should be a place to run dogs and not a wetland, and another group that wanted to maintain the historic airfield," said Hopkins.

Promoting Management for Wildlife

In the 2000s, GGAS partnered with the Presidio Trust to restore habitat for quail, whose numbers in the city were dwindling. Unfortunately, the work did not succeed in stabilizing the quail population, but it created several areas of healthy, native-landscaped habitat where there used to be trash and ice plant.

GGAS's insights also helped the Presi-

dio realize that its natural resource mission needed to attend to wildlife, not just native vegetation. Two years ago, the Presidio Trust added a wildlife ecologist to its staff.

"Plants had been the focus of our natural resource program," said Presidio Trust Program Manager Damien Raffa. The quail partnership "brought us into the realm of wildlife in a way we hadn't been before."

Since 2012, dedicated GGAS volunteers led by Corny Foster have held monthly beach clean-ups for Snowy Plovers and other shorebirds at the Presidio's Crissy Field. Matt Zlatunich led a study to inform our recommendations for dog management policy.

And this summer GGAS brought its Centennial exhibit to the Presidio. With the Presidio Trust, we co-produced a brand-new outdoor art event that featured 20 local nature artists rendering Presidio bird species in vibrant sidewalk chalk around the Presidio.

"We are honored to have such a strong, enduring working relationship with the Presidio," said GGAS Executive Director Cindy Margulis. "This beautiful and storied parkland reminds us of how well-managed parklands are vital for wildlife, and for people, too."



Caspian Tern and chick.

RESTORING SEABIRD COLONIES THROUGH SOCIAL ATTRACTION

DAN ROBY

LOCATION / DATE

San Francisco
Thursday, October 19
6:30 p.m. refreshments,
7 p.m. program

In 1973, National Audubon successfully restored a breeding colony of Atlantic Puffins on an island in the Gulf of Maine where they had been extirpated in the early 20th century. They relied on social attraction—an innovative use of decoys and audio playback that in subsequent years has helped restore seabird colonies across the globe. In the Pacific Flyway, social attraction helped restore breeding colonies of Caspian Terns. It's currently the centerpiece of a last-ditch attempt to prevent extinction of the Chinese Crested Tern.

Dan Roby is the Unit Leader–Wildlife for the U.S. Geological Survey's Oregon Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, and Professor of Wildlife Ecology at Oregon State University. His primary area of research interest is the physiological ecology and conservation biology of birds, with an emphasis on seabirds. Dan was awarded the Ralph W. Schreiber Conservation Award from the American Ornithological Society in 2017.

EARLY BIRD RENEWAL

Renew your Golden Gate Audubon Society membership now for 2018! If you renew now, we won't need to mail you a year-end renewal letter, saving postage, time, and trees. And if you're a member of National Audubon who has not yet joined Golden Gate Audubon, please do! Benefits include this quarterly *Gull* newsletter, free admission to our monthly Speaker Series, and discounts on birding classes and boat trips. And of course...being part of a community that has worked to protect Bay Area birds for the past 100 years.

Renew or join online at goldengateaudubon.org/join or call us at (510) 843-2222. If you join now, your membership will cover the rest of 2017 and all of 2018.

RIDGWAY'S RAILS AND ADAPTIVE TIDAL MARSH RESTORATION

JULIAN WOOD

LOCATION / DATE

Berkeley
Thursday, November 16
6:30 p.m. refreshments,
7 p.m. program

Ridgway's Rail, an endangered species dependent on S.F. Bay tidal marshes, is making a comeback, due partly to large-scale tidal restoration projects happening throughout the Bay. Will these populations be resilient in the future as climate change leads to rising seas and storms? How can innovative restoration and habitat enhancement help them survive?

Julian Wood is S.F. Bay Program Leader at Point Blue Conservation Science, where he promotes wetland-dependent bird conservation through innovative research that informs on-the-ground habitat restoration and management. He also helps agencies prepare for the negative impacts of climate change on wildlife and human communities.



Rick Lewis

San Francisco: First Unitarian Universalist Church and Center, 1187 Franklin Street (at Geary). Public transit, street parking, and parking in a lot for a fee are available. Directions: Visit www.uusf.org/contact.

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



2018 BAY AREA BIRDS PHOTO CALENDAR

Make the beauty and wonder of Bay Area birds part of your daily life with our **2018 Birds of the Bay Area** photo calendar. Enjoy stunning photos of eagles, owls, warblers, shorebirds, hummingbirds, and more by dozens of the Bay Area's most talented wildlife photographers. Just \$20 plus tax, it makes a great holiday gift. It may even inspire your friends to start birding! View and order online at goldengateaudubon.org/calendar, or purchase at our office.

DONATIONS

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

Donations from June 1, 2017 through August 31, 2017

GOLDEN EAGLE

(\$1000 and above)

March Conservation Fund,
Jay & Lisa Pierrepont

PEREGRINE FALCON

(\$500 to \$999)

Andrea Burhoe, Ann Richter, Caroline Booth, Jill Bryans, Marjorie Fletcher, Mary Betlach, Viola Gonzales

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RIDGWAY'S RAIL

(\$100 to \$249)

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(To \$99)

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Bonnie Bell, in honor of WWOOC
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Susie Wallenstein, in honor of George Peyton
Teri and Chris Wills, in honor of George Peyton
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David Hansen, in memory of Nancy Hodgkinson
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Estate of Jill Bryans

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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRD BOX

Report your unusual bird sightings: 415.681.7422

ABOUT GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON

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*.

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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Nature Store

Visit our online store at goldengateaudubon.org/store.

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**3 Bay Area Hotspot:
Presidio of San Francisco**

Ongoing restoration is turning the onetime military base into a birder's treasure trove.

4 Birding Travel in 2018

Join us to discover the birds and cultures of Peru, Oaxaca, Costa Rica, Baja California, Southern Arizona, Southern Oregon, and Alaska.

6 Speaker Series

October: Restoring Seabird Colonies through Social Attraction. November: Ridgway's Rails and Adaptive Marsh Restoration.

BACKYARD BIRDER



Bob Gunderson

Townsend's Warbler.

WANDERING WARBLERS

BY BLAKE EDGAR

Both a pleasure to observe and a pain to identify, warblers require the backyard birder's keen attention. No more so than in the fall, when adult warblers amplify the identification challenge by swapping vibrant breeding plumage for more cryptic coloration. Drab juveniles add a further confounding factor.

Wood-warblers comprise 115 species in the New World family *Parulidae*. About half of the species occur in North America. As a general rule, North American warblers migrate northward in

spring to boreal forest breeding grounds. In the fall, these insectivorous songbirds head south in greater numbers, bound for wintering grounds in Mexico and Central America. Describing the fall warbler migration in "Invisible Visitors," poet David Budbill marvels at the "myriad species, all looking sort of like each other, yellow, brown, gray, all muted versions of their summer selves."

After foraging by daylight to refuel on insects, berries, and sometimes sap, warblers travel mainly by night. They cover vast distances; in one study, a banded Yellow-rumped Warbler clocked in a flight speed of 362 kilometers or 225 miles per day during migration.

Named for its most distinctive field mark, the Yellow-rumped Warbler is a common winter resident of lowland California. Both the western (Audubon's) and eastern (Myrtle) American subspecies can be seen here during fall or winter, when Myrtles may stray westward. Throat color (white in Myrtle, yellow in Audubon's) easily distinguishes adults.

Another seasonal visitor, Townsend's Warbler arrives from coniferous forests of the Pacific Northwest, flying south in a narrow band along the coast. Many overwinter in our oak woodlands or coastal conifers, conspicuous with their contrasting black-and-yellow faces.

Townsend's Warblers depart by April, but the cycle continues as spring brings the return for breeding of other species, such as Orange-crowned Warbler and Wilson's Warbler. Although it's rare to catch a glimpse of the former's orange head feathers, the Wilson's male sports an obvious black cap atop its olive and yellow body. Spring is the season when warblers more readily live up to that name, with males singing to claim a territory or a mate. At any time of year, it's worth paying some attention to the warblers around us.