



Clockwise from top: Red-tailed Hawk; East Oakland students studying seabird nests at Alcatraz Island; Arrowhead Marsh in Oakland, adjacent to wetlands rescued by Golden Gate Audubon for restoration.

Clockwise from left: Bob Lewis, Anthony DeCicco, Jerry Ting

## Deciding to Live with Birds



David Yarnold

Every day, we make decisions about the way we use San Francisco Bay's resources. Carelessly or thoughtlessly, many of these decisions jeopardize birds and wildlife that share the Bay, sometimes forcing them out of the region altogether.

The continued existence of some of the world's most threatened and endangered species depends upon the wisdom of our decisions.

Golden Gate Audubon (GGA) is dedicated to protecting Bay Area birds, other wildlife, and essential habitat. In this report, you will read about our extraordinary efforts to educate people young and old about environmental stewardship through our award-winning

Eco-Education Program, volunteer-led classes and field trips, and collaborations such as our oil-spill response partnerships. You will also see how our volunteers and students restore waterfront dump sites, transforming them into beautiful and life-supporting bird habitat. And you'll learn about how this process connects people of all ages and backgrounds with the natural world.

Sometimes, however, education and restoration are not enough to stop ill-conceived development that threatens habitat, and we are forced to take aggressive action. GGA leads the way in advocating for enforcement of the California Environmental Quality Act, tirelessly holding industry leaders and public officials accountable, mobilizing thousands of volunteers into action, and, when

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## Conserving Wetlands and Wildlands

Since Golden Gate Audubon's founding, its victories have helped make the Bay Area a remarkable place to live. In 2009–10, we continued to protect important habitat through partnerships, community engagement, and volunteer advocacy spearheaded by our San Francisco and East Bay Conservation Committees and the Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge. Our goals are to protect and restore wetlands, riparian corridors, marine sanctuaries, and coastal

habitat for resident birds and other wildlife, as well as the nearly six million migratory birds that depend upon the Bay region for food and respite. To further that goal, we have conserved thousands of acres of habitat through identification of key sites to ensure they are protected. Hundreds of volunteer hours are dedicated to restoring overlooked and often degraded locales. This year, our conservation achievements included:

### PROTECTING ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES

- Expanded habitat for the endangered California Clapper Rail at the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline in Oakland. USGS biologists confirmed that the rails had begun using our restored native plantings for protective cover at high tide and that the plants serve as a buffer between the busy

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# Speaking for Birds—Wildlife Protection Advocacy

**Golden Gate Audubon** leads in advocating for wildlife in San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, and other Bay Area urban centers. We work proactively and positively with state and county governments, park organizations, and agencies responsible for our shorelines, grasslands, open spaces, and forests.

Our work includes changing public policy, educating public officials, advocating for recreational uses that respect wildlife needs, and protecting specific habitats from inappropriate development. All our activities aim to conserve the region's unique biodiversity for the benefit of wildlife and human populations, ensuring a sustainable ecosystem. This work is extremely important in the face of climate impacts and increasing urban pressures.

During 2009–10, we:

- *Pressured Alameda County and wind companies at Altamont Pass* to live up to standards set by the county's own Scientific Review Committee and implicit in our 2007 legal settlement, requiring significant bird fatality reduction.
- *Reduced risks of building collisions for birds* by continuing our Lights Out for Birds campaign and produced bird-friendly building guidelines adopted by San Francisco.
- *Legally challenged a proposed bridge over Yosemite Slough* on San Francisco's southern waterfront to protect the Candlestick Point State Recreation Area. Efforts continue to protect and restore the slough, part of a previous restoration agreement.
- *Collaborated with North Richmond community groups* to ensure protection of the biologically important Point Pinole and North Richmond shorelines, as well as access for local residents to some of the Bay's finest natural habitat.
- *Successfully convinced San Francisco Recreation and Parks to conduct an Environmental Impact Report* at Beach Chalet in Golden Gate Park, where artificial turf installation is planned, along with night lighting that will disrupt birds and important natural habitat.
- *Worked with the City of San Francisco and others to craft best practices* for new wind-power installations. We developed bird mortality monitoring protocols that are now being used at experimental wind projects on Treasure Island and at the San Francisco Zoo.

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pathway and one of the birds' most densely used high-tide roosting spots in the area.

- *Protected the endangered California Least Terns at the Alameda shoreline.* GGA staff and volunteers, including Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge, engaged in monthly restoration work to improve tern breeding habitat and conducted surveys of all wildlife using the refuge. Our efforts have made this the most productive Least Tern colony in California.
- *Advocated for and monitored threatened Western Snowy Plovers at the Crissy Field Wildlife Protection Area and Ocean Beach in San Francisco.* We presented our carefully documented report on the Snowy Plovers' use of these areas and habitat disturbances to Golden Gate National Recreation Area staff, who modified park activities to better protect the plovers and other park wildlife.

## RESTORING AND CONSERVING BIRD AND WILDLIFE HABITATS

- *At Pier 94* on the southern San Francisco waterfront, volunteers from schools, summer camps, businesses, and the public planted scores of native plants and picked up trash, transforming this site into a wetland where American Avocets breed and many species forage and roost.
- *At Lands End* in San Francisco, we partnered with the Golden Gate National Recreation Area to restore a seabird site GGA originally helped save from development.
- *At Lake Merced* volunteers put in native plants and built shelters for birds, including the California Quail, nearly gone from San

Francisco. Our monitoring surveys of breeding cormorants, herons, and other birds provided data to convince area planners that they must preserve wildlife habitat at the lake.

- *Bay-wide,* we developed an oil-spill response protocol, trained staff in hazardous material techniques, and took part in regional response planning as a member of California's Oiled Wildlife Care Network

## GATHERING SCIENTIFIC DATA AND PROVIDING EXPERTISE FOR BIRD PROTECTION

Achievements in 2010:

- *Completed breeding bird surveys* that monitored the success of the prairie grassland restoration on the North Richmond shoreline and provided the first formal surveys at Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline. Twenty high school interns received scientific bird identification and monitoring training and took part.
- *Gathered ongoing data* on endangered California Least Tern breeding success, Western Snowy Plover activity, and the California Clapper Rail. Other surveys conducted regionally included our two Christmas Bird Counts.
- *Conducted citizen science monitoring efforts.* Volunteers we trained contributed hundreds of hours to gather important data on bird populations. They also helped us expand public awareness about protecting fragile bird populations. Our work in underserved communities in Richmond, Oakland, and Bayview–Hunters Point in San Francisco provided new outdoor skills to local residents and engaged them in stewardship aimed at protecting habitat in their own communities.

Anthony DeCicco



Youngsters capture plankton in nets so they can monitor pollution at the shoreline.

I grew up in Oakland, and I know what's it's like for city kids to lose touch with the natural world. This program is exemplary not only because it teaches kids about caring for the Earth—it also involves their family members as well. I'm looking forward to doing more great work next year in the program!

First-year Eco-Education teacher

## Educating the Next Generation: Eco-Oakland and Eco-Richmond

Golden Gate Audubon's Eco-Education programs meet the needs of children in the poorest schools in East Oakland and North Richmond. Our work in these communities connects children and families from diverse backgrounds with the outdoors. We inspire environmental stewardship, pave the way toward future careers, and teach children to understand nature. Unlike many programs, ours offers year-round, in-depth learning for children, parents, and siblings—both in the classroom and in the field through restoration projects, scientific learning, and activities that show how human actions impact wildlife.

During 2009–10, our Eco-Education staff reached more than 1,000 adults and 750 schoolchildren in 26 third-, fourth- and fifth-grade classes. These families restored endangered California Clapper Rail habitat at Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline, and the children noted success when secretive Clapper Rails scuttled to use new plants. Other families took field trips to Point Pinole and the North Richmond shoreline to study wetlands and invertebrates, and learned to observe and identify their local birds.

Our classroom lessons and field trips are correlated with state standards in science, math, language arts, and social studies. We build leadership skills as students share their new knowledge with peers and family. Our focus on local stewardship encourages everyone to take part in weekend projects, learning to become hands-on activists who can protect the natural spaces that their communities so badly need and deserve.

Thanks to our partners' generosity, we took many children and families to Alcatraz, Aquarium of the Bay, and Muir Beach to learn about connections between watershed, bay, and ocean. More than half the families had never visited the ocean and could not have afforded these trips.

To generate even greater community impact, we trained six high school students to mentor elementary school students and supervise fieldwork projects. At the Audubon California Assembly at Asilomar, they summed up their leadership work and burgeoning interest in environmental protection.



Verne Nelson

The endangered Clapper Rail enjoys improved habitat thanks to the efforts of Eco-Education students.

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necessary, building coalitions to litigate in order to represent wildlife in decision making.

Now in our 93rd year, Golden Gate Audubon is the largest of California's 49 Audubon chapters. Our roots run deep in volunteerism, and we have grown into a remarkable hybrid team of passionate volunteers and talented professionals.

But your support is essential as population increases and lack of environmental awareness compound our region's ills. We hope you will take time to look at the exquisite wildlife around you and be inspired to support Golden Gate Audubon's efforts to ensure sound, bird-friendly decisions for our built environment.

—Diane Ross-Leech, President, and Mark Welther, Executive Director

### Golden Gate Audubon Functional Expenses FY 10 Audit



# Historical Spotlight on Our Conservation Achievements

**1917–20** Golden Gate Audubon stops three major oil companies from dumping crude oil into the Pacific Ocean unhindered.

**1962** Golden Gate and Marin Audubon join in raising funds to purchase Audubon Canyon Ranch.

**1971–73** GGA and allies help acquire Point Pinole shoreline as a park.

**1975** Golden Gate Audubon wins protection of Emeryville Crescent and its designation as critical open space.

**1980** GGA begins studying the endangered California Least Tern and working to protect habitat at Alameda Naval Air Station.

**1986–95** Golden Gate Audubon stops illegal filling of wetlands at Arrowhead Marsh and wins a settlement requiring Port of Oakland to restore 70 acres of seasonal wetlands at Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline.

**1994** A GGA California Least Tern symposium results in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designating 579 acres of land and



Snowy Egret.

Charles Denson

400 acres of water for a proposed Alameda National Wildlife Refuge.

**1993–99** Golden Gate Audubon convinces the Port of San Francisco to create Heron's Head Park at Pier 98 on the southern San Francisco waterfront.

**2004** Golden Gate Audubon wins protection for Gateway Valley in Orinda, the only

land bridge for wildlife between north and south Contra Costa County. It garners funds to restore the degraded Yosemite Slough wetlands in Hunters Point and to begin a restoration project at nearby Pier 94. GGA also settles major legal case against wind companies at Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area, requiring them to substantially reduce bird deaths.

**2007** Golden Gate Audubon leads in organizing more than 250 volunteers for spill response after the November *Cosco Busan* oil spill.

**2007** GGA settles a lawsuit over construction of a 24-hour trucking terminal adjacent to Oakland's MLK Jr. Regional Shoreline, which provides critical habitat for birds.

**2008** The Eco-Oakland Environmental Education Program receives the Governor's Award for Environmental and Economic Leadership.

**2009** The North American Association of Environmental Education recognizes the Eco-Oakland Program for Outstanding Service in Environmental Education.

## Join Us to Support Bay Area Wildlife Protection!

If you are not yet a member of Golden Gate Audubon, please join us to enjoy the many benefits of membership. Individual memberships are \$35. Family memberships are \$50. Golden Gate Audubon is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Although we are a chapter of the National Audubon Society, we raise our own budget to conserve Bay Area wildlife and teach the next generation about sustainable ecosystems. Please join online at [www.goldengateaudubon.org](http://www.goldengateaudubon.org) or mail your check to Golden Gate Audubon Society, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G, Berkeley, CA 94702. If you have questions, call 510.843.2222.

## Leave a Legacy

Please consider including Golden Gate Audubon in your will or estate planning. There are a variety of tax benefits. Please specify that your gift should go to "Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc., a California nonprofit corporation." Using this exact language is highly important in properly directing your gift. For more information, contact Marsha Mather-Thrift, Development Director, at 510.843.7295 or [mmathert@goldengateaudubon.org](mailto:mmathert@goldengateaudubon.org).

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