

THE WANDERING TATTLER

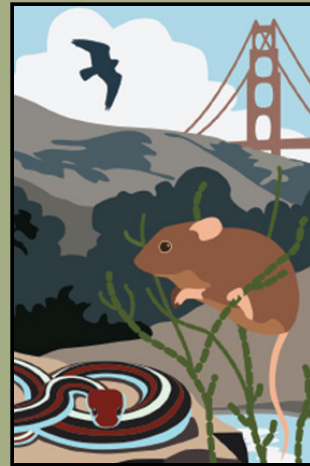
THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA CHAPTER
OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

****This newsletter is desktop-friendly, but may have formatting issues on your mobile device. Please use a computer because, we don't want you getting excited and breathing heavy into your mask and fogging up your phone.**

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IN THIS ISSUE:

New Board Members
Announcements
Chapter Merchandise
Officer Directory
..and more.



CORVID-19, CAW, CAW.



Welcome back from a year and a half of pandemic hell. Most of us are still dealing with it in our personal and professional lives, but things are definitely improving. Our Board wishes you all well and hopes that you are healthy and looking forward to the current field season and a chance to socialize once again with our members. We would like to congratulate all of our students who have completed and achieved their degrees during this year. Yours was a particularly challenging year and to some extent, you got ripped off. This will be one of those memories you can share with fellow graduates for the rest of your lives. We hope that moving forward, we can achieve some sense of normality, although, as biologists and scientists, we know that

nothing ever stays the same and that we will continue to evolve along with it. Enjoy your summer, join us for our trainings and mixers, and take an active part (once again) in your chapter.

New Board Members for 2021

Your Board continues to add new talented and dedicated individuals and we'd like to take this opportunity to introduce you to them. While some may be familiar faces and have recently taken on new roles, we'd like to recognize them here and on our website <https://www.sfbaywildlife.org/officers>. Thanks to Meghan Bishop, our Media Director, for keeping our Website up to date and exciting.



Rachel Roberts

President (formerly "President-elect")

Rachel is a wildlife biologist living and working in the Bay Area. Originally from the east coast, Rachel fell in love with California on her first visit in 2003 and has called this state her home for the last 13 years. Rachel obtained both a B.S. and M.S. in Organismal Biology, Conservation, and Ecology from San Jose State University. A mammologist at heart, the focus of her thesis was on bobcats in the Mount Hamilton Range. Rachel has also had the pleasure of working with the elusive southern Sierra Nevada fisher population, mountain lions, condors, burrowing owls, California red-legged frogs, and many other flora and fauna in California. With her drive to be immersed in nature as much as possible, Rachel's favorite past time is wandering the great outdoors with her trusty side kick Genji.



Laura Duffy

President-Elect (formerly "Public Outreach")

Laura is a wildlife biologist in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her love of the outdoors and running around with the wild things has led to a lifetime of study, travel, and work centered on conservation ecology. She holds a BS in Marine Biology from The College of Charleston and a MS in Marine Biology from SFSU's Estuary & Ocean Science Center. Between degrees, she lived onboard a research vessel (SEA class S-215), worked as a seasonal field technician for SC Fish & Game and NOAA's National Center for Coastal Ocean Science, and as a NMFS Fisheries and Marine Mammal Observer in Alaska. Laura's love of public outreach has developed as a side effect of her work with anything from plankton to tarantulas to harbor seals. She loves to collaborate with others and share her enthusiasm through education – whether her audience is a group of school children or stakeholders! Her MS thesis, which studied harbor porpoise in SF Bay, included an on-going citizen science program with the SF Bay Chapter of the American Cetacean Society. While living in the Bay Area, Laura has also volunteered in wildlife rehabilitation, in the Cal Academy's Bones Lab, as an education docent at The Marine Mammal Center, and as a bird bander for Golden Gate Raptor Observatory. Other interests include sailing, swimming, hiking, trail-runs, camping, painting, reading, and hanging on the beach.



Leslie Koenig

Professional Development Co-Chair

While you'll recognize Leslie from past trainings and workshops where she worked closely with Molly Peterson, she is now leading the charge and co-chairing the PD for the chapter. Leslie grew up in the mountains of Colorado where she developed a passion early for anything outdoors growing up playing in the trees, lakes and rivers of the Rockies. She obtained a bachelors of science degree in Biology with a minor in Chemistry from Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado. She moved to the Bay Area after graduating and loves continually learning about the biological diversity of the region and state. She lives in Livermore and enjoys hiking, skiing, camping and anything outdoors with her family.



Nicole Christie

Professional Development Co-Chair

Nicole has been a wildlife biologist for 7 years and is currently working at Kleinfelder.

She studied western pond turtles during her time at Sonoma State, where she received her B.A. and M.S. in biology. In her free time, she enjoys exploring new Bay Area hiking trails, going to beer festivals, and spending time with her animals.



Caitlyn Bishop

Public Outreach Coordinator

Caitlyn Bishop is a wildlife biologist currently living in Oakland, California. After years of chasing loons and geese across the Alaskan Arctic tundra and penguins in Antarctica, Caitlyn has found herself comfortably back in the Bay Area, surrounded by her garden and her wonderful friends and family (who still aren't entirely sure what she does for a living). Her passion to understand and advocate for wildlife and their habitats has driven her to specialize in California environmental policy and law as a biological consultant. Inspiring and encouraging others to do the same has been and will always be one of the most important and special aspects of her career. Although formally trained as a terrestrial biologist, Caitlyn can be found scouring tide pools for nudibranchs at low tide, spotlighting for moths and scorpions at dark, or searching the forest for edible plants and mushrooms after a recent rain.



Lauren Ross

Student Affairs

Lauren is a wildlife ecologist in the SF Bay Area with a passion for wildlife conservation. She has been dedicated to studying and saving wildlife since the day she caught her first snake in her front yard at age five. After graduating with a Biology Degree from SDSU, Lauren sought a variety of experiences from Mexican wolf recovery in Arizona, mountain lion and bobcat monitoring in the Santa Monica Mountains, to Western bluebird reintroduction in Washington. Her love for travel has also led her to seek opportunities worldwide including lion and elephant research in Kenya, elephant research in Sri Lanka, and herpetofauna research in Costa Rica. In between her travels she obtained a master's degree in environmental management from USF while working for the State. In her free time, she loves hiking and camping, snowboarding, scuba diving, fly fishing, running, and photographing the beauty of nature.



Gabriel Reyes

Diversity Chair

Gabe Reyes grew up in the Bay Area, spending much of his childhood running around Tilden Park in Berkeley, CA and the many other preserves scattered around the region. Gabe attended San Francisco State for undergrad in Zoology with a minor in Geography. He then attended Humboldt State University for his master's degree, studying the social behavior of hoary bats during migration. He then went on to work in environmental consulting focusing on bats and renewable energy impacts to wildlife. He now works as a bat biologist for the US Geological Survey Western Ecological Research Center, studying the ecology of bats in the Western US. When not out chasing bats, he can be found chasing other critters (salamanders, bugs, etc.), playing music, trail running, eating chilaquiles, and learning random new skills.

When a red-legged frog is not a red legged frog?

Editor

Field guides are an enormous help when trying to identify a plant or animal. The authors developed these guides with years of experience and confidence in the identity of the species. Some authors, David Sibley, Roger Tory Petersen and Robert Stebbins for example, were advanced artists whose eye for detail was captured in their paintings and plates in their field guides. Of course, due to limited space, authors generally include images of the most common phenotypic specimens. Species which have distinct color morphs, like the dark phase of the red-tailed hawk, are included because these color variations can be expected to be seen in the field.

But, as you the field biologist knows through your own experience, nature often presents a "horse of a different color"

I was walking in my yard yesterday when I noticed some movement in the grass. I reached down to capture a beautiful lime green-colored adult Sierran chorus frog. The location was near a small seasonal pond in my yard that has since dried due to the lack of spring rains. This frog was still using the moist area when I found it. The bright color turned on a light bulb in my head and I started thinking of the many colors of the chorus frogs I'd seen over the years. This led me to mentally cruise my photo files for red-legged frogs I'd seen in the past and start to question if field biologists were running into trouble with identification of oddly-colored frogs.

With this in mind, I added a few images of CA red-legged frogs that I've taken over the years to show the variation in colors and to emphasize that identification cannot solely rely on the standard images presented in a field guide or as described in the natural history of an animal. This obviously goes for many species of animal and plant and I am sure you have all experienced interesting color variations in your line of work.





As you can see, each of these animals is an adult CA red-legged frog but they all differ somewhat significantly from each other. While the first three have "red legs" and a red hue overall to the lower abdomen and legs, there is considerable variation on the amount of red coloration on other parts of the body. The adult at the top right was as red overall as any frog I had seen to date while the frog at center left has the classic red legs and the dark olive body coloration similar to what is depicted in popular field guides. But, look at the frogs in the center right and bottom left position. No apparent red coloration at all. Take that one step further and what the heck is going on with the frog in the lower right image? I'd never seen one with this coloration other than this individual. This frog has a pumpkin colored body and very dark eyes. One can see some red splashes across the abdomen in this adult but overall, not what to expect from any field guide plates. There is clearly a lack of dark pigment in the skin of this frog.

These pictures are an important reminder that identification of species which are variable in morphology should rely of consistent field marks that show up in each of these animals. Each animal is an adult and has classic red-legged frog characteristics including: prominent dorso-lateral folds running down either side of the back, a light-colored malar stripe (line at base of jaw), and a tympanic membrane (ear drum) equal to or slightly smaller than the size of the eye. These field marks become increasingly important when one cannot see the entire animal as in the frog depicted in the center right photograph. While it may show some red coloration on the hind legs (typically the underside of the legs) we cannot see that in this image.

Variation in Nature due to diet, environment or mutation may have an advantageous outcome for the individual leading to regional increases in some color patterns and perhaps long-term effects on populations. We'll have to wait and see if our red-legged frogs continue to be "prince-like" or take a turn towards a pumpkin. Until then, enjoy Nature's diversity.

News regarding the Callippe Silverspot Butterfly (*Speyeria callippe callippe*) CSB



The USFWS authored a recent decision to reduce the official geographic range within which the Service will recognize and offer regulatory management of the CSB. The CSB is listed as a federally-threatened species in California and once occurred widely across the San Francisco Bay Area including the South and East Bay landscapes. Due to habitat loss, conversion and fragmentation, populations of the butterfly have dwindled and are limited to three officially-recognized regions. These regions include the San Bruno Mountain area in San Mateo County, the grasslands around Sears Point Raceway in Sonoma County, and a limited area in Solano County. Areas previously occupied by the CSB within which populations have been locally extirpated or have a high percentage of individuals that are genetic hybrids with *S.comstocki*, are no longer receiving protection by the USFWS. The Service has limited resources to manage the species and as a result, has distilled the three areas where the most "genetically pure" populations of CSB occur. That isn't to say that these three populations are in any way secure and without risk of extinction. In fact, genetically, they may be extremely limited in their makeup, thereby lending them to an increased risk of extirpation due to environmental and biological factors.

CDFW “*Becoming and Outdoors Woman*” Program revisited

Editor

I found myself cleaning my office during one of those wet and cool days in Humboldt County. No way to cut the grass or reason to ride the tractor; too wet to work outside. The dogs gave me that look as if to say “nothing going on today, huh?” Oh well, my office certainly needed a spring cleaning; easy to neglect with field surveys and fish to catch.

During the process of hauling former trees to the recycling bin, I came across an old copy of “*Outdoor California*” from Winter 1995. Okay, I’m not that much of a hoarder, but I saved it because I had a few published photos in that edition. I fingered through the pages and realized that there were several articles regarding the first year of the State program on “*Becoming an Outdoors Woman*”. I chuckled as I read the title of the second story “*They Left Home to Become Women of the Outdoors*”. The program’s intention, as you may well know, was to introduce women into the male-dominated activities of sport hunting, fishing, and camping. Not only would this be a boost to the Department’s mission to encourage all state citizens to participate, but it was another option to diversify the field, literally. Women attended a two-day class and were instructed in the ways of freshwater fishing, firearms safety and use, archery, outdoor survival skills, canoeing and best of all, wild game *hors d’oeuvres*. According to this article, adult women of all ages and makeup attended. Some were city dwellers; others had their roots in the country but all hadn’t had the chance to develop or utilize the skills that were being offered through this program.

Come full circle another 25 years to present day and many of our female chapter members have in fact participated in this or a similar program. The state DFW and other agencies offer annual opportunities for women to hunt and fish on public and private lands through an application process. If chosen, the participants take part in guided hunts or fishing trips and other outdoor adventures led by both landowners and their representatives. One of the more interesting aspects of recent participation in these programs is that people are more interested in obtaining their own food, want to know from where that food comes and want to know that their food is raised without toxins often associated with processed food and intensive agricultural practices.

The California Waterfowl Association offers the program as well. Information can be found on their website <https://calwaterfowl.org/cwa-bow> as well as the National Turkey Federation <https://www.nwtf.org/about/hunting-heritage/wito>. Many other programs are available to introduce women to outdoor activities.

We have certainly come a long way since 1995 both in our attitudes towards conservation, hunting and fishing, organic versus processed foods, and mostly, gender diversity in both the workforce and recreational opportunities. I am very happy to have been both a witness and a participant to this changing environment and welcome the continued evolution of our profession and the associated recreation that we all enjoy.



Erika Walther, former Chapter President, with a few green-winged teal taken at the Kerry Duck Club as part of a "Becoming and Outdoors Woman" program

Kaitlyn Zedeker, a fourth year Humboldt State undergrad majoring in Wildlife, with a beautiful Mad river steelhead.



I caught Irv Tiessen by phone while he was in the middle of building a retaining wall on his property. It's a bit ironic as you will see from this article, because Irv, in a huge way, is the "supportive wall" for the Alameda County population of western bluebirds. The historical western bluebird population declined due to several reasons including loss of grasslands to development and loss of available cavities within which they nest, the latter often due to competition with the larger and aggressive Eurasian starling. The Western Bluebird Association has worked with volunteers across California to implement a nest box program to significantly increase the number of successful bluebird nests in the state.

According to Irv, a successful bluebird box is all about "placement, placement, placement" similar to the old realtor adage of "location, location" being the most important piece in a marketable property. Too close to the brush and one can expect house wrens to move in; too high in a tree and woodpeckers and chickadees might place the no vacancy sign on the door. Other species that use the boxes include tree swallows and violet-green swallows.

At 82 years old, he continues to monitor and maintain these boxes on his own accord and budget. His line of boxes run from the Sunol Valley to Livermore in Alameda County. Since 1995, he has maintained an annual count of 330-340 boxes and some past years, as high as 440 boxes. Most of the boxes are placed for bluebird nesting but Irv does maintain boxes for common barn owl as well, aiding in the reduction of lawn-destroying gophers without the use of pesticides or trapping. Currently, Irv monitors 23 owl boxes, two kestrel boxes, and 312 bluebird boxes. These WEBL boxes are situated on 8 separate trails that cover some 16 square miles of Alameda County. During 2020 his boxes fledged 1359 birds, that included 811 bluebirds (target species), 66 owls and two kestrels. He was forth in the state for total birds, but 1st for the target species, the western bluebird.

After talking at length with Irv, one can see that his hobby is a passionate one stemming from a pure appreciation of nature. As a "bird rancher" for many years, Irv is directly tied to the lands unlike most people in a 9-5 job these days. His passion exudes from him as he stands with a poster board with images and data that captivates his audience.

One can't help but wonder how many of his boxes are occupied by returning residents and how many recognize Irv and his truck in the beginning of the nesting season. He has certainly proved to be a good landlord and through his efforts has supported an incredible amount of recruitment of fledgling birds into the county. Irv is a great role model to us all, especially us wildlifers whose passion for our work keeps us going through thick and thin. Thanks Irv, for your tremendous effort!!



In-person Mid-year Mixer!!

Would anyone like to join us for a picnic in the park?

Our San Francisco Bay Chapter mid-year mixer will be held in person 😊

Saturday, August 7th at [Lake Chabot Regional Park](#).

Save the date and look out for details coming soon.

Rep the SF Bay Chapter!



[Click here](#) to buy high performance t-shirts, gaiters and Monarch (i.e. "one of a kind") pins. Visit our online store [here](#)! These items are also available at our workshops and field trips.

OFFICER DIRECTORY

Elected Board Members:

President.....Rachel Roberts
President-Elect.....Laura Duffy
Past-President.....Natalie Reeder
Western Sec Chapter Rep.....Kathleen Grady

Appointed Board Members:

Secretary.....Carli Baker
Treasurer.....Molly Dodge
Newsletter Editor.....Joe DiDonato
Media Director.....Meghan Bishop
Conservation Affairs.....Patricia Valcarcel
Historian.....Mary Yan

Committee Chairs:

Professional Development.....Leslie Koenig
Professional Development.....Nicole Christie
Diversity Chair.....Gabriel Reyes

Student Affairs..... Lauren Ross
Public Outreach.....Caitlyn Bishop

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Are you a photographer or have something you want to share? Submit your photographs and stories to the editor by September 1 for inclusion in the next newsletter.

Editor: Joe DiDonato
jedidonato@gmail.com

BLAST FROM THE PAST

If you have any interesting wildlife tales from your adventures in the field, or photos that you would like to share, please write to us at

<https://www.sfbaywildlife.org/contact>

Photo Credits

CRF, Callippe butterfly, Ravens: Joe DiDonato
Erika Walther, Kaitlyn Zedeker: self submission
Board images: Self submissions
Neck Gaiter: Rachel Roberts
Merchandise/Monarch Pin: Ricka Stoelting



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