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San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of the Wildlife Society

“Candidate” President’s Message

Matthew Bettelheim

Even though **my** participation was slack last year, 2012 was clearly a banner year for the San Francisco Bay Area chapter of The Wildlife Society under the more-than-capable hands of departing President Natasha Dvorak. For a chapter that has been notoriously sedentary in recent years (in part because our members live throughout the Bay Area and it is difficult to bring everyone together), Natasha successfully rekindled chapter participation through an impressive list of monthly activities, from the canid trapping workshop to the Farallones to Hawk Hill to Año Nuevo State Park to Pinnacles.

As for myself, even though Natasha has left large shoes to fill, I look forward to taking full advantage of the momentum we’ve gained under her leadership this past year. For those of you who don’t know me, I am a full-time husband and father who pays the mortgage by billing himself as a wildlife biologist, science writer, and natural historian specializing (read: geeking out) in western pond turtles and legless lizards in particular.

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Chapter Announcements

SFBA Chapter Mixer and Membership Meeting: March 27 at 6 pm, Pyramid Alehouse, Walnut Creek. Meet the new board (seven new members!) and see what’s coming up in 2013.

Special Recognition for Outstanding Dedication to TWS

B. Pittman



In February 2012, SFBA Chapter President Natasha Dvorak was recognized for five years of service as the TWS Chapter Representative to the Western Section.

Having worked together for many years, I can attest to Natasha Dvorak's heartfelt commitment to the wildlife profession and to The Wildlife Society as a whole. She joined the SFBA Chapter in 2007 and quickly took up a leadership role as Chapter Representative to the Section; a position she retained for five years. In this capacity, she was instrumental in growing our membership and organizing some of the most memorable workshops in recent years. The San Joaquin kit fox survey and identification workshop at the Carrizo Plain, marine mammal excursions to the Farallones, and numerous smaller excursions came together with her help. That alone deserves special recognition, but Natasha didn't stop there. As Chapter President in 2012, her (modest) goal was to provide a different Chapter offering every month, many of which are highlighted in this newsletter. As Past-president of the SFBA Chapter, she continues to provide mentoring support to our freshman class of Chapter officers, board members and committee members. We wish her well in her new role as President-elect of the Western Section.

Treasurer's Report

Rachel Danielson

This just in from our new Treasurer Rachel Danielson: at the close of 2012 the SFBA Chapter balance was \$17,060 with somewhere between 88 and 224 members (obviously we're still working out some bugs on this front).

Conservation Affairs

Melissa Newman

I'm really excited to take a more active role in the Chapter this year and get to know more of our members. Over the next year I would like to help continue to create opportunities for interaction between our members, come up with ways we can get our Chapter name out there in the community, and work on attracting underrepresented portions of our membership (e.g., students). We're currently organizing a Chapter Earth Day event, other events and outings, and developing a Chapter logo contest and Chapter swag. I would love to hear from you about any ideas you have regarding ways we can strengthen connections within the Chapter, get our Chapter name out there, and have a good time!

"Suburbia is where the developer bulldozes out the trees, then names the streets after them.."

- Bill Vaughan

President's Message, Continued from pg. 1

As a California native, born and raised, I cut my teeth in the wildlife world in 1993 as an interpretive guide at the Lindsay Wildlife Museum in Walnut Creek handling raptors and reptiles. (To this day, there's still a photo of me in one of the displays taken on an unfortunate bad hair day – I'll buy a beer for the first person who can find it.) After graduating from U.C. San Diego in 2000, I entered the work force as a seasonal biologist with the then California Department of Fish and Game. My tour of duty took me next to Oregon Fish and Wildlife for seasonal fish sampling on the ports, and then eventually to my first of several consulting gigs back in the San Francisco Bay Area, where I've stuck it out to this day.

With this new year comes a near-complete changing of the chapter guards. Stepping up this year as my right hand is Mandi McElroy in the role of President-elect (*Candidate*), as well as Rachel Danielson (Treasurer), Susie Bennet (Secretary), Tammy Lim (Professional Development Committee chair), Melissa Newman (Conservation Affairs Committee chair), and Jennifer Frost (Media Director). Natasha Dvorak will continue on with her responsibilities as Past President (& President-elect of the Western Section), and gazetteer Brian Pittman will continue as Newsletter Editor.

Despite my late start, I hope to carry us through this year with the ultimate goal of encouraging membership participation and fostering a sense of community and family. In the mix this year, the board is already cooking up something new and different. We'll be taking the digital plunge into Facebook and revamping our website. There are plans for a new chapter logo. And there are whispers of swag. I hope you all will help me bridge these gaps by joining us on weekend jaunts and lending the chapter your time and ideas. This is our chapter, and it can only be as good as we make it.



Candidate for SFBA Chapter President Matthew Bettelheim assesses the health of a Bay Area western pond turtle population

“Money won't buy happiness, but it will pay the salaries of a large research staff to study the problem.”
- Bill Vaughan

2012 Chapter Highlights

Natasha Dvorak

Año Nuevo State Park - February 2012

In the center of it all is where we can often find herpetologist Karen Swaim, just like in this picture (below). We had nearly a full tour group on our adventurous trip to Año Nuevo State Park during elephant seal breeding season. On our walk out to the dunes, we stumbled upon a San Francisco garter snake on the trail! Fearing for its safety and worried about its health, Karen- who holds a 10(a) permit to handle the species- checked it for a pit tag and relocated out of harm's way, and squeezed in an impromptu public notice and a natural history lecture! Abuzz with giddiness at seeing this beautiful listed species, we bounced out to the dunes where we saw bulls, cows and pups of the elephant seal variety (how many different animals are you picturing right now?). Guided and protected by park naturalists, we were able to see bull males quite closely among the dune's scrub vegetation. From an overlook, we watched males fight, large seals run down pups like bowling pins, and mothers lounge with their young. Thank you ANSP and Karen Swaim for being our naturalists on this trip, and sharing your passion and knowledge for coastal dune species.



2012 Chapter Highlights

Skyline Wilderness Park - March 2012

A beautiful vista of Napa and Sonoma Valleys, as seen from a hiking trail at Skyline Wilderness Park in Napa. This outing, which was going to be led by Napa Open Space District Manager John Woodbury, was cancelled due to a lack of member response and a stormy forecast. At the last minute, there was an influx of member interest but still a looming threat of rain. We let the generous Mr. Woodbury off the hook (and I later returned his generosity by performing a pro bono nesting bird survey at Bothe-Napa Valley State Park on behalf of the Chapter), but continued with “go if no rain/ don’t go if rain” plans. Challenging the elements, member Michael Fawcett and I, along with our family members, met at the parking lot to greet any adventurous Chapter folks who might show up for a hike. Alas, it was just us and our families, and yes, we did get severely rained on! But we hiked through beautiful forest, saw haunting remains of the old Napa State Hospital crematorium emerging like Mayan ruins from a lush hillslope, and found newts, tree frogs, and bird nests along the way. We looked for western pond turtles and red-legged frogs in a large lake, and took a different return route through blooming chaparral. A warm sun embraced us for a while, and I captured this photo of what I want to believe is holly-leaved ceanothus, a rare plant found at the park. Those of you in the know, please be welcomed to confirm my botanical desires or snap me back to reality! Thank you Mother Nature for being our naturalist at this event, and sharing your passion and knowledge for beauty and mystery.



2012 Chapter Highlights (Cont.)

Pinnacles National Monument - April 2012

“You can discover more about a person in an hour or play than in a year of conversation.”
- Plato

BLM biologist and bee expert Paul Johnson, shown here in uniform before raptor biologist Doug Bell, guided our tour through bat caves at Pinnacles National Monument. The caves were unoccupied, because our presence would be too much of a disturbance to roosting and maternal bat colonies, but they were exciting and impressive nonetheless. The promise of seeing a previously undetected bat was always with us, and we kept our eyes peeled in the dim light. We were enthralled to find red-legged frogs in a cold, clear cave pond just feet from the walking trail. Our extended hike into the peaks of Pinnacles brought us to a reservoir that was truly breathtaking in its beauty, possessing a heavy, mythical quality enhanced by the shroud of rainclouds. The hike also brought us views of a nesting peregrine falcon and a prominently-perched singing wren, clear vistas of the Central Valley, carpeted slopes of wildflowers, and the ever-present hope of seeing a condor. When we returned to camp slightly before dusk, we collectively embraced our first condor sighting, as a few flew in to roost for the night amidst forested slopes opposite our camp. We had a wonderful time around the campfire that evening, with Paul generously providing extra sleeping bags and blankets for the cold night ahead. We tent campers awoke on sleeping pads that had become rafts during the night, floating in a tent-sea of rainwater. All the kids, of course, got the worst of it. But we shrugged off the discomfort in the warming sunshine of a promising new day, and shared breakfast with condor biologists. We listened to a very informative presentation on condors before setting out for more hikes and condor viewing. Quite a few members had excellent viewing of condors on their way home from the weekend camping trip. Thank you Paul Johnson and Doug Bell for being our naturalists on this trip, and sharing with us your passion and knowledge of the flora and fauna – and majestic avians - of Pinnacles.



2012 Chapter Highlights (Cont.)

Shoreline Park - July 2012

Dr. Lynne Trulio, Department Chair of Environmental Studies at San Jose State University and an expert in burrowing owl conservation, took us on a tour of Shoreline Park in Mountain View. They built it and they came! After reclamation of a landfill and years of habitat enhancement, burrowing owls finally moved in to Mountain View and began breeding. From a distance we enjoyed watching the adult pair and two of their offspring. I was wishing for a more powerful camera when I snapped this photo, but the charismatic energy of the burrowing owl is still powerfully evident. We also had the pleasure of viewing breeding colonies of Forster's and Caspian terns, and the horror of watching oblivious tourists very nearly run down tiny pied-billed grebe chicks with their paddleboat. Thank you Lynne for being our naturalist on this field trip and sharing with us your passion for burrowing owls and shorebirds.



“Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we find it not.”

- *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

2012 Chapter Highlights (Cont.)

Farallones --September 2012

Chapter member Roger Harris, a principal at LSA, Associates and a naturalist for The Oceanic Society, leads our chartered boat trip to the Gulf of the Farallones Marine Sanctuary. Oceanic voyages are always a gamble, and while spotting was infrequent we still got a great show from the grey whales. And what a treat to see a young humpback whale just setting out on its own, as well as a harbor porpoise mother and baby swimming in unison. The pelagic birds were enjoyable, as we saw an unusual mass of sooty shearwaters just outside the Golden Gate Bridge, along with puffins and auklets near the islands. We had cooperative weather that allowed us to circle the islands and see all of the shoreline. Roger, thank you for being our naturalist on this trip and sharing your vast knowledge and enthusiasm for the wildlife of the Farallones.



2012 Chapter Highlights (Cont.)

Hawk Hill – October 2012

Pictured below is a colleague of Allen Fish, Director of Golden Gate Raptor Observatory, releasing a recently-banded Cooper's hawk. Few Chapter souls braved the incredibly dense fog that cleared literally within the final ten minutes to provide a breathtaking view of the city and its skies. GGNRA had even taken down their signs for the daily Hawk Talk! We persevered and were rewarded with an informative talk by Allen, who also teaches upper-division raptor biology at UC Davis. Hawk Talk was delightfully interrupted with sightings of numerous raptors and songbirds, and followed with a banding demonstration starring a male and female Cooper's hawks. Roger Harris and Joe DiDonato were able to stay and hawk watch with Allen, enjoying an unparalleled opportunity to share or sharpen their raptor skills. For some expert photography, please see Sarah Bettelheim's (wife of Matthew Bettelheim) website: <http://www.vintageviewsphotography.com/on-top-of-hawk-hill/>. Allen, thank you for being our naturalist on this trip and sharing your vast knowledge and enthusiasm for raptors.



2012 Chapter Highlights (Cont.)

Canid Tracking Identification Workshop - October 2012

Professional tracker Jim Lowery of Earth Skills, Inc., featured at bottom left, reveals a series of badger tracks from the dusty road. Learn quickly because the wind is blowing them away before our very eyes! Over the course of this two-day Canid Tracking Identification course (which we will host again this year!), we were introduced to tracking basics and learned key diagnostic differences among coyote, domestic dog, red fox, gray fox, and kit fox tracks. We struggled to put our newfound skills to the test amidst difficult tracking conditions imposed by notorious Altamont winds, but with Jim's help we were able to identify four of the five target canid species over the weekend: coyote, domestic dog (unaccompanied by a human companion), red fox, and grey fox. Neither red fox nor gray fox (nor badger) had yet been picked up by remote cameras that are used to routinely assess the property. Chapter member Joe DiDonato continues to use remote cameras and tracking surveys to search for the infamous fifth species, that Holy Grail of Altamont canids, the San Joaquin kit fox. We are all hoping for it, Joe! Keep us posted! Thank you, Joe, and Jim Lowery, for being our naturalists for this event and sharing with us your passion and knowledge of grassland mammals.

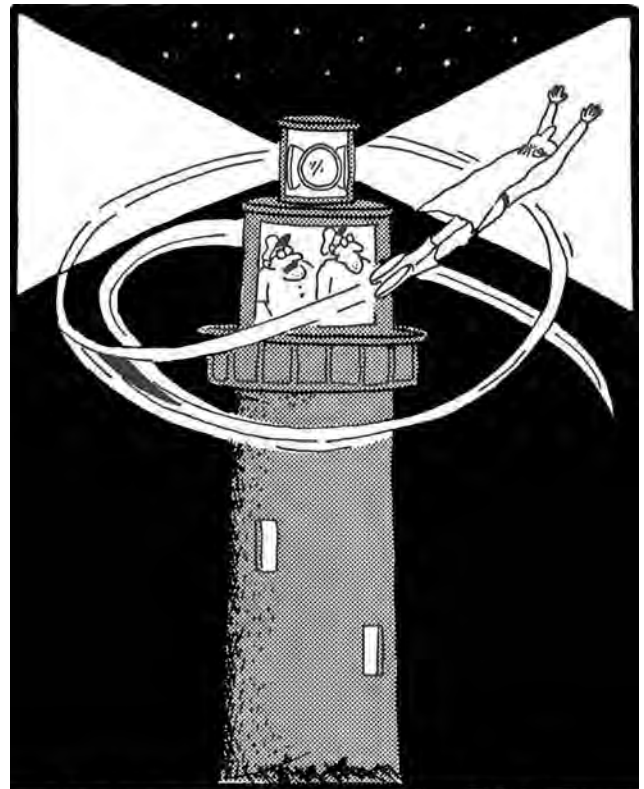


Past President's Message

Thank You Chapter Members and Event Leaders for a Fantastic 2012!

Natasha Dvorak

Hello, fellow Wildlifers! It has truly been a pleasure serving as your 2012 Chapter President. I had so much fun planning and attending events with you, and getting to know you better. I look forward to every TWS event because I know I'll be in good company, sharing a special love for the natural world, engaged in thought-provoking conversations and learning something from everyone, all the while enjoying good laughs and good times. I would especially like to recognize and thank our generous Chapter members who spearheaded events this year: Paul Johnson, Doug Bell, Karen Swaim, Lynne Trulio, Roger Harris, and Allen Fish. Thank you for making time within your busy careers to lead events for your professional colleagues.



"For God's sake, kill the lights, Murray . . . He's back again!"

The River Otter Ecology Project Seeks a Board Member

ROEP is a team of biologists and environmental educators based in West Marin, California. They work in partnership with the National Park Service and others on understanding the ecology of a newly re-discovered population of Bay Area river otters and protecting the habitats essential to their long-term survival.

The new Board Member will lead fundraising for otter science and conservation efforts with a focus on grants and a growing donor membership base. Commitment requires at least 2 days/week & 1 year.

Details regarding this position are available online at: www.riverotterecology.org



SF Bay Area Chapter Officer Directory

Elected Board Members

President (Candidate)	Matthew Bettelheim (blackfish@nasw.org)
President-elect (Candidate)	Mandi McElroy (mandi.mcelroy@gmail.com)
Past-President	Natasha Dvorak (ndvorak@esassoc.com)
Chapter Rep. to the Section	Jessica Martini-Lamb (Jessica.Martini.Lamb@scwa.ca.gov)

Appointed Positions

Secretary	Susie Bennet (susie.bennett@gmail.com)
Treasurer	Rachel Danielson (rdanielson@esassoc.com)
Newsletter Editor	Brian Pittman (bpittman@esassoc.com)

Committee Chairs

Professional Development	Tammy Lim (tammyclim@gmail.com)
Conservation Affairs	Melissa Newman (mnewman@harveyecology.com)
Media Director	Jennifer Frost (jencfrost@gmail.com)
Vacant Positions	Student Affairs, Public Outreach, Registrar, and Historian

Chapter Newsletter

While we generally aim to print four newsletters each year, distribution has been a bit patchy recently. We can't share your stories if you don't share them with us, so please consider dropping a note into the newsletter. Past issues of the SFBA Chapter newsletter are available online at the website link(s) on this page.

Deadline	Mailing Date
January 15	January 31
April 15	April 31
July 15	July 31
October 15	October 31

Membership Renewal

If you would like to renew please contact SFBA Chapter Treasurer Rachel Danielson. Regular annual dues are \$10.

Chapter Website

Stay tuned. The new SFBA Chapter website will soon be moved from its current location: <http://joomla.wildlife.org/sanfrancisco/> to: <http://www.wildlife.org/sanfrancisco/>

Cover Photo

A San Joaquin pocket mouse (*Perognathus inornatus*) from the Los Vaqueros Watershed, Contra Costa County. Photo by B. Pittman

