

of Clapper Rail and wintering shorebirds, along with an impressive group of vagrants has given this location the aura of a birding hotspot. A sampling of rarities seen here include: Sedge Wren, Prothonotary Warbler, Nelson's Sharp-tailed and Swamp sparrows. Birding is best from fall through spring.

Directions: On the east side of Hwy 101, north of the San Francisco Airport, take North Airport Blvd. to Belle Air Road and turn east, toward the Bay. At the end of the road is a parking area between the Water Quality Control Plant and Costco.

3. Coyote Point Park

P 

This former site of an Ohlone fishing village now has a marina and the Coyote Point Museum for Environmental Education. The forested area around the museum has many passerine species. The shoreline and breakwater are used by a wide variety of shorebirds; some are coastal species not often seen further south in the Bay. Many ducks forage in the area. A variety of rare and interesting birds have been found here: Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Harlequin Duck, Least Tern, and Elegant Tern are among these species. Black Oystercatchers and Black Turnstones are regularly seen. The best birding is from fall through spring.

Directions: Approaching on southbound Hwy 101 in Burlingame, take the Poplar Ave. exit, turn right onto Humboldt St., then right again onto Peninsula Ave. Go over the Hwy 101 overpass, turn left onto Bayshore Blvd., go under the overpass, and left onto Coyote Point Dr. Go beyond the entry booths to the marina. Park to the right of the building.

From northbound Hwy 101, take the Dore exit in San Mateo, and turn left immediately onto Bayshore Blvd. Continue north to the northern edge of the golf course, turning right onto Coyote Point Dr. Go beyond the entry booths to the marina. Park to the right of the building.



Mixed shorebird flock ©Les Chibana

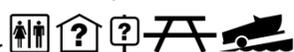
4. Foster City/San Mateo Bridge

P 

This part of the Bay hosts a wide variety of birds in winter and in migration that are not often seen elsewhere in the Bay. The shell bar near Tarpon St. is a great shorebird roost at high tide and the mudflats provide excellent foraging during low tide. Among the birds you can find here are Marbled Godwit, Willet, Red Knot, Black and Ruddy turnstones, and Short-billed Dowitchers. The waters near the bridge attract many ducks, often including rarities like Long-tailed and Harlequin ducks, and White-winged and Black scoters. Viewing is easy from the paved Bay Trail on the levee. The birding is good from fall through spring.

Directions: From Hwy 101 south of the Hwy 92 interchange, take Hillsdale Blvd. east to the Bay edge. The road becomes Beach Park Blvd. as it turns southeast to parallel the Bay edge. Park between Egret St. and Tarpon St. and walk up to the levee along the Bay.

5. Palo Alto Baylands

P 

Long a haven for the Bay Area's Clapper Rails, these wetlands, protected by the City of Palo Alto, provide an opportunity to see many breeding, migrating, and wintering marshland birds. Black and Yellow rails, Nelson's Sharp-tailed and Swamp sparrows are among the rarities that have appeared here. More expected species include Greater and Lesser Scaup, White-tailed Kite, Northern Harrier, numerous shorebirds, Bonaparte's and Thayer's Gulls and marshland passerines. Just to the south is another bird-rich area, the Mountain View Shoreline, composed of Charleston Slough, several former salt ponds, and Shoreline Park and Lake. Birding is excellent year-round.



Snowy Egret ©Rob Pavey



Green-winged Teal ©Les Chibana

Directions: From Hwy 101 in Palo Alto, go east on Embarcadero Road to the stop sign at the T-intersection. Turn left and go to the parking lot just beyond the bridge, across the road from the Nature Center.

6. Alviso Environmental Education Center

P 

This part of the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge sits at the south edge of the Bay next to old salt production ponds. Along with the adjacent New Chicago Marsh, these are great places to look for a wide variety of raptors, shorebirds, and gulls. Barn Owls regularly use a nest box at the visitor center; Burrowing Owls have dens in the Marsh and the Arzino Ranch area to the south. Birding is best from fall through spring.

Directions: Take Hwy 237 at the south end of the San Francisco Bay, between Hwys 101 and 880. Go north at the 1st Street exit, turn right onto Nortech Pkwy, then left on Disk Dr. The road merges with Grand Blvd. and passes Spreckles Ave. on the left. As this road, now Los Esteros Rd., curves right, the entrance to the Alviso Center is straight ahead. Enroute to the Center, the road crosses New Chicago Marsh.

7. Coyote Hills Regional Park

P 

This wonderful mix of woodland and marsh habitat provides important respite for migrants, as well as a home for breeding and wintering birds. It's a rare location that can have Marsh, Bewick's, and Rock wrens within a short distance. It's a winter haven for ducks, a potent foraging and breeding area for raptors, and the bayside portion accommodates many shorebirds. Birding is good year-round.

Directions: From Hwy 84, east of the Dumbarton Bridge toll booths, go north on Thornton Ave./Paseo Padre Pkwy to Patterson Ranch Rd. Turn left onto Patterson Ranch Rd. and go to the entry booth.

8. Hayward Regional Shoreline

P 

Retired salt production ponds and tidal marsh provide unique birding experiences along the Bay edge heavily modified by human activity. The ponds in the southern portion provide great wintering sites for ducks, shorebirds, and gulls. The second nesting event of Black Skimmer in the Bay occurred here. A hybrid Arctic/Forster's Tern also nested in this area. In the middle section, Mt. Trashmore, a popular name given to a capped landfill, is a great place to find vagrant longspurs along with American Pipit in the fall. Cogswell Marsh is one of the few locations around the Bay edge where one can find wintering Red Knots among the numerous shorebirds that forage on the low tide exposed mudflats. Best birding is from fall through spring.

Directions: To get to the Hayward Area Recreation and Park District's interpretive center at the south end, take the Clawiter Rd. exit from Hwy 92 east of the San Mateo Bridge toll plaza, go to the north side of Hwy 92, and head east on the frontage road, Breakwater Ave. The center is on Breakwater Ave. To get to the central portion of this area, from Hwy 880 in Hayward, go west on West Winton Ave. to the parking lot at the end. To get to the northern section, take Grant Ave. west from Hesperian Blvd. just south of Hwy 880. Go to the parking lot at the end of the road. Access to the Bay edge is via a trail to the north, then west along San Lorenzo Creek.

9. Martin Luther King, Jr. Regional Shoreline

P 

This wetland is a wonderful gem sandwiched between a marina, the Oakland Airport, and a business park. Arrowhead Marsh, the focal point of this East Bay Regional Park, provides California Clapper Rail with a place to re-establish along the Bay edge; recent surveys found that more than 5% of the world's population reside here. The tidal mudflats provide winter forage for many ducks, shorebirds and gulls, as well as breeding grounds for American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt and Northern Pintail. A vagrant Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow recently wintered at the marsh. Least Terns visit from their breeding grounds a short distance to the north. Birding is best from fall through spring.

Directions: From Hwy 880, take Hegenberger Rd. toward the Bay. Just before the Oakland Int'l Airport entrance, turn right on Doolittle Dr., then right again on Swan Way. Turn left, immediately, into the Park entrance to get to Arrowhead Marsh.

10. Lake Merritt

P 

Originally a salt marsh named "Laguna Peralta," Lake Merritt became the first National Wildlife Refuge in North America in 1869. This lake, located in Oakland, is a popular breeding and wintering site for waterbirds possibly attracted by the resident species. Barrow's Goldeneyes regularly winter in nearby waterways. One or two Tufted Ducks often winter here. Several species of herons and egrets nest on the islands. Birding is good all year.

Directions: From Hwy 580 in Oakland, take the Grand Ave. exit, and go west, toward the Bay, .6 mi. to Bellevue Ave. and turn left into Lakeside Park and park by the Rotary Nature Center.

11. Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline

P 

The park provides unique views of this inland waterway. The annual grasslands slope down to the water with pockets of oak woodland and coastal scrub dotting the hillsides, offering lots of edge habitat for birds. Raptors benefit from the updrafts along the hillsides while in search of prey. Western Meadowlark and Western Bluebirds are at home in and over the grasses. The park's elevation above the water provides an excellent vantage point to scan for waterfowl. This is one of the wilder areas to bird in this region. The birding potential is good all year.

Directions: There are two non-contiguous sections to this park. To get to the western section from Hwy 4 west of Martinez, exit at Cummings Skyway, turning right on Crockett Boulevard. Turn right again on Pomona Street in Crockett. Pomona Street becomes Carquinez Scenic Drive. Proceed to the staging area, on the left. Driving another mile or so will bring you to another small staging area, also on the left. From I-80 in Crockett, exit onto San Pablo Avenue or Pomona Street, depending on your direction of travel (San Pablo Avenue become Pomona Street east of I-80). Go east on Pomona into Crockett and follow directions above.



White-tailed Kite ©Rob Pavey

12. White Slough

P 

White Slough is an example of the inexorable force of nature. After several yearly levee breaches from the Napa River to the west, this formerly impounded area, slated for future development, was declared to be a natural part of the Bay and moved into the jurisdiction of the Bay Conservation and Development Commission. A natural tidal action returned to these mudflats that now host hundreds of waterfowl, raptors, shorebirds, and gulls. Black Rail are known to breed here and it is suspected that the California Clapper Rail does so, as well. The Saltmarsh Common Yellowthroat also breeds here, as do Least Terns. All seasons have good birding potential.

Directions: White Slough is located in Vallejo, bounded by Marine World Parkway (Hwy 37) on the west, Sonoma Blvd. on the east, and Sacramento and Redwood streets on the south. Take the Redwood Pkwy exit from Hwy 80 in Vallejo and go west. This road becomes Redwood St. and crosses Sonoma Blvd. Turn right on Sacramento St. and stop short of the overpass that crosses Marine World Pkwy. There is only street parking here. A paved trail starts on the north (right) side of the road, goes toward Marine World Pkwy, and turns north along the western edge of the wetlands.



Least Tern ©Les Chibana

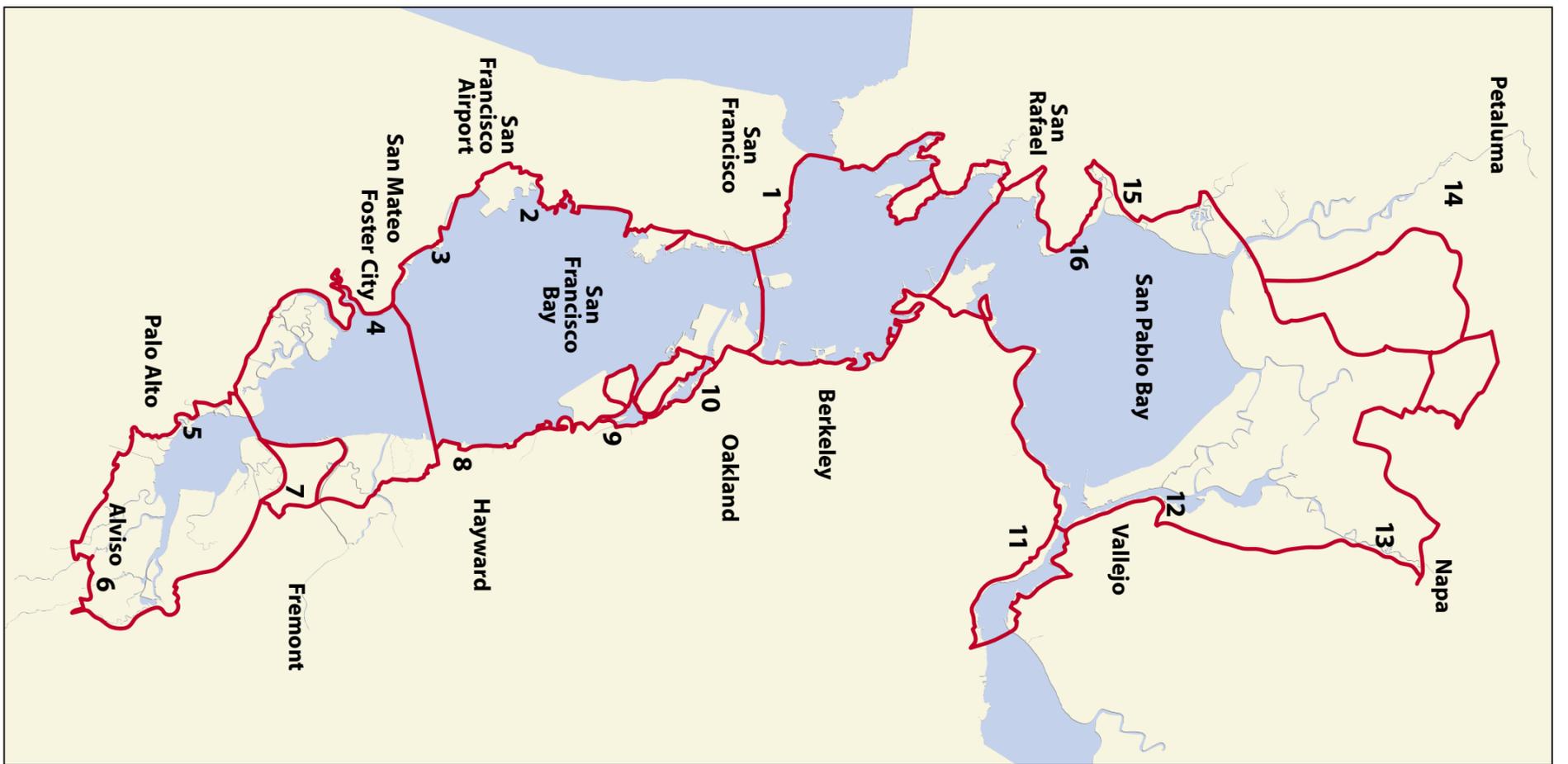
13. John F. Kennedy Park

P 

This park is one of the few sites along the Bay Trail that is located some distance from the Bay. It maintains a connection with to Bay via the Napa River. This is a well-developed park maintained by the City of Napa. The marshland habitat along the river provides many birding opportunities, and a boat ramp allows for access to the water to bird from kayaks, canoes, and other water craft. Kayaks and canoes can be rented at the 4th St. City Dock in Napa. The riparian habitat has many mammals as well as birds. On the right as you approach the park, there is a pond that can have waterfowl and shorebirds. All seasons have good birding potential, winter is best for seeing waterfowl and raptors.

Directions: The park is accessed from Hwy 121, the Napa-Vallejo Hwy, south of Napa along the east side of the Napa River, near Napa Valley College. Take Streblow Dr. off Hwy 121 and go west to the parking lot near the boat ramp.

The site research, the design and production of this publication were by Les Chibana, Chibana Design, Palo Alto. Thanks to Rob Favey for his great shots of 'Snowy Egret and White-tailed Kite. The Bay Trail map was graciously provided by Reineck and Reineck Design, San Francisco. Clapper Rail cover photo © Les Chibana.



The San Francisco and San Pablo Bay edges are potent areas to find watchable birdlife. "Birding the San Francisco Bay Trail" points out some of the best birding areas found along the Bay Trail. Most of the locations have paved parking lots with restrooms and are Whole Access. Some have other features like visitors centers, interpretive signs, boat ramps, and camping. This is not a complete listing of all of the birding sites; consider it an introduction to the great birding that can be found along the Bay Trail.

1. Presidio



This area on north coast of San Francisco offers a variety of birding. Battery West on the ocean-side of the Golden Gate Bridge is a good spot for migrant raptors and waterfowl in the fall. On the Bay side of the Bridge, one can see landbirds. The Crissy Field restored wetland has enticed marshland birds back to the area. The Palace of Fine Arts has nesting herons and waterfowl. Many pelagic species forage just offshore. In Fort Mason, headquarters of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the Community Garden often has intriguing passerines. Birding is best from fall through spring.

Directions: Access to Batteries West and East, Crissy Field, and the Palace of Fine Arts is from Mason St./Marina Blvd., along the northern shoreline of San Francisco. Further east, Marina Blvd. becomes Bay St., from which one can enter Fort Mason.

2. Colma Creek Public Shore



This unassuming creek and marsh habitat north of San Francisco Airport has surprising birding potential. The growing number

P Parking

\$ Entry fee

♿ Whole Access

🚻 Restrooms (flush or chemical)

🏠 Interpretive center

❓ Interpretive signs

🪑 Benches

🪵 Picnic tables

🚤 Boat launch ramp

🏕️ Camping

14. Shollenberger Park



A wonderful example of a seasonal wetland that has been kept close to its purpose, this park is a set of ponds that has been valued by the citizens of Petaluma as wildlife habitat and a flood control overflow basin for the Petaluma River. Many species of waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, and marshland birds congregate at the ponds and associated wetlands. Blue-winged Teal and an occasional Long-tailed Duck have been seen at the park. Pacific Golden-Plover and Baird's Sandpiper pause at the Park to "top up their tanks" during migration. Birding is good year-round.



Marsh Wren ©Les Chibana

Directions: From Hwy 101 in Petaluma, go east on Lakeville Hwy (116 East), one mile to South McDowell Blvd. Turn right (south) and go about .25 mi. to the park entrance on the right, opposite Cader Lane. Turn right to get to the paved parking lot.

15. Las Gallinas Sanitary District Wildlife Area



Waste water treatment plants often provide birders excellent opportunities to see marshland species from levee trails encircling ponds. The Las Gallinas Plant includes wildlife viewing as part of its mission. Numerous waterfowl, including Cackling Goose and Eurasian Wigeon, can be found. An amazing array of raptors have been sighted, including Osprey, Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, 4 species of falcon and Great Horned Owl. Clapper and Virginia rails are present, and Black Rail may also be found. Harris's Sparrow has been seen with the wintering sparrows. River Otters live in the area. The birding is best from fall through spring.

Directions: From Hwy 101 north of the Marin Civic Center in San Rafael, take the Smith Ranch Rd. exit and drive east toward San Pablo Bay. As you approach the entrance to John McInnis Park, cross the railroad tracks and turn left before the entrance, continuing on Smith Ranch Rd. to its end at the Las Gallinas Wildlife Area parking lot.

16. China Camp State Park



This is one of two State Parks with waterfront on the San Francisco Estuary and the only one accessible by car. Located on the edge of San Pablo Bay in San Rafael, this park has a unique juxtaposition of oak woodlands, grasslands, and pickleweed saltmarsh. Many ducks and waterbirds work the shoreline and deeper waters, while landbirds inhabit the grasslands, forest edges and mixed oak habitat. The park has many trails, or one can bird from the roadway and parking areas. The birding is good year-round.

Directions: From Hwy 101 south of the Marin Civic Center in San Rafael, take San Pedro Rd. toward the Bay. The Park is at the Bay and you will see picnic sites, restrooms, and the ranger station.



The Bay Trail is a planned recreational corridor that, when complete, will encircle San Francisco and San Pablo Bays with a continuous 500-mile network of bicycling and hiking trails. It will connect the shoreline of all nine Bay Area Counties, link 47 cities, and cross the major toll bridges in the region. To date, approximately 260 miles of the alignment have been completed. The Bay Trail is a project of the Association of Bay Area Governments. You can purchase individual maps of the six regions of the Trail, or the whole set, at their website <www.baytrail.org>.

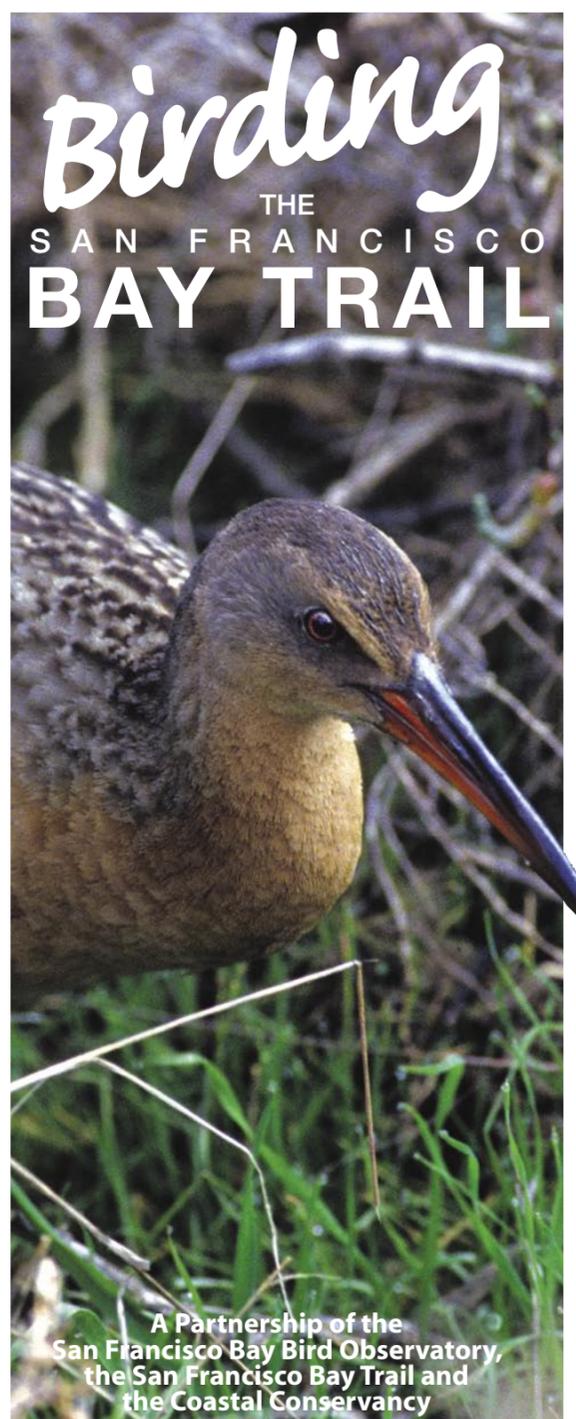
"Birding the Bay Trail" was funded in part by a Coastal Conservancy and Bay Trail grant proposition 12, The Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000. The Coastal Conservancy acts with others to preserve, protect and restore the resources of California coast and San Francisco Bay. <www.coastalconservancy.ca.gov>

The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of birds and their habitats through science and educational activities. SFBBO provides information to governmental agencies, industry, and the public to support informed resource management decisions for the San Francisco Bay area. SFBBO directed the production of this publication.



© 2005 SFBBO. All rights reserved.

♻️ Printed on recycled paper



A Partnership of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, the San Francisco Bay Trail and the Coastal Conservancy