The Bay Trail is a planned 500-mile walking and cycling trail around the entire San Francisco Bay. When complete, it will connect the shoreline of all nine Bay Area counties, link 47 cities, and cross the seven major toll bridges in the region. To date, approximately 350 miles – over 70% of the Bay Trail’s ultimate length – have been completed. The San Francisco Bay Trail is a project of the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. The 25-card Bay Trail map set can be purchased by visiting www.baytrail.org.

The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory is a not-for-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. For more info, visit www.sfbbo.org.

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**Birding the San Francisco Bay Trail**

The Bay Trail offers grand views and a variety of birding. Battery Godfrey and Lands End west of the Golden Gate Bridge are hotspots where birds can be seen migrating north in spring and south in fall. Migration in spring includes swifts, warblers, orioles, and more. Many of the same species also pass through again in the fall, but at this time of year look especially for raptors crossing the Golden Gate strait from the Marin headlands. Large flocks of Vaux’s Swifts are often seen overhead in fall while Elegant Terns are pursued by Parasitic Jaegers offshore. The best months for catching migration at the Presidio are April-May and September-October. Further east at Fort Mason, the bountiful courts at the Community Garden attract a variety of landbirds. Throughout much of the Presidio there are stands of mature Eucalyptus, Monterey cypress, and Monterey pine that were planted over 100 years ago. Since their planting, the tall trees have been colonized by forest species including Pygmy Nuthatches, Dark-eyed Junco, and Red Crossbills. Directions: parking for Battery Godfrey is on Langdon Court in San Francisco, and on Pope Road for the community garden.

**Facilities Available at Sites**

- Parking
- Entry Fee
- Whole Access
- Restrooms (Flush or Chemical)
- Interpretive Center
- Interpretive Signs
- Benches
- Picnic Tables
- Boat Launch
- Camping

**Presidio**

This area at the mouth of the San Francisco Bay offers grand views and a variety of birding. Battery Godfrey and Lands End west of the Golden Gate Bridge are hotspots where birds can be seen migrating north in spring and south in fall. Migration in spring includes swifts, warblers, orioles, and more. Many of the same species also pass through again in the fall, but at this time of year look especially for raptors crossing the Golden Gate strait from the Marin headlands. Large flocks of Vaux’s Swifts are often seen overhead in fall while Elegant Terns are pursued by Parasitic Jaegers offshore. The best months for catching migration at the Presidio are April-May and September-October. Further east at Fort Mason, the bountiful courts at the Community Garden attract a variety of landbirds. Throughout much of the Presidio there are stands of mature Eucalyptus, Monterey cypress, and Monterey pine that were planted over 100 years ago. Since their planting, the tall trees have been colonized by forest species including Pygmy Nuthatches, Dark-eyed Junco, and Red Crossbills. Directions: parking for Battery Godfrey is on Langdon Court in San Francisco, and on Pope Road for the community garden.

**Coventry Point Recreation Area**

This former site of an Ohlone fishing village now has a marina, a museum, and a eucalyptus forest. A variety of sea ducks can be seen around Coventry Point, some of which are harder to find elsewhere in the bay. Surf Scotties, stoup (especially Greater), and Common Goldeneyes are all approachable as they dive for mollusks just offshore. There is sometimes a Harlequin Duck roosting on the rocks below the Stills. Black Turnstones and Surfbirds scour the rocky shoreline in fall and winter, as do a few Wandering Tattlers from late summer through fall. The eucalyptus forest is busy with warblers and hummingbirds when the trees are flowering in winter, and also during migration when landbirds drop in. An untypically detailed of this exotic forest is the Nuttall’s Woodpecker, which is resident. The recreation area has attracted many rare birds over the years including Dusky Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. Directions: the park is located at 1701 Coyote Point Drive in San Mateo.

**Ravenswood Salt Pond SF2**

The unusual topography of salt pond S2 is the result of an ambitious restoration effort by the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project. Initiated in 2008, thirty islands of varying shapes were created in the former salt pond to determine habitat preferences of nesting waterbirds. The experiment was a success, as today the pond supports nesting American Avocets, Caspian and Forster’s Terns, and Black Skimmers. Another attraction here are the salt pond birds, which can number in the tens of thousands at the peak of their migration in April. Directions: from the East Bay, cross the Dumbarton Bridge and exit at the Ravenswood National Wildlife Refuge sign. Drive the frontage road for 0.6 miles, go under the bridge, and park on the right. From the Peninsula, take Bayfront Expressway toward the Dumbarton Bridge. Exit at the Ravenswood National Wildlife Refuge sign and follow the frontage road to the parking on the left.

**Palos Verdes Baylands**

The Palos Verdes Baylands and vicinity form an extensive complex of wetlands and uplands that has excellent birding opportunities throughout the year. Sora and Virginia’s Rails can be heard calling from the fresh and brackish marshes, while Ridgway’s Rails clamber in the salt marshes along the bay edge. The boardwalk around the Lucy Evans Nature Center is one of the best places to see the latter species as they strut through the exposed marsh channels. Black Rails are also occasionally seen here during king tides in winter. Northern Harriers patrol the marshes and uplands at Bigby Park during the day, and sometimes Short-eared Owls emerge at dusk from the adjacent Palos Verdes Community. A great diversity and abundance of waterbirds can be seen on the salt ponds at all times of the year. The baylands are home to a small breeding population of Black Skimmers and a Barrow’s Goldeneye sometimes spends the winter at Shoreline Lake. The melodious song heard around the Rengstaff House in spring and summer comes from a nestling pair of Bullock’s Orioles. Directions: parking for Shoreline Lake is at 3360 N Shoreline Boulevard In Mountain View; Bixby Park is at 2275 Embarcadero Road in Palo Alto; and the Lucy Evans Nature Center is at 2275 Embarcadero Road in Palo Alto.

**Heron’s Head Park**

Once slated to be a new shipping terminal in the 1970s, this slice of land ultimately became one of San Francisco’s natural gems thanks to a wetland restoration project in the 1990s. Heron’s Head Park is representative of what much of the San Francisco coastline once was: grassland uplands gently sloping into the pickleweed marsh bordering the bay. The pleasantly musical song of the many White-crowned Sparrows carries over the uplands, which are dotted with orange poppies in spring. On the mudflats a variety of ducks and shorebirds feed close to the trail during migration. Listen for the shrill calls from a pair of Black Oystercatchers that sometimes nest on the all dipping pier in spring and summer. Directions: the park is located at 22 Jennings Street in San Francisco.

**Caspian Tern**

Several hotspots at the southern end of the bay include parts of Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Alviso Marina County Park, and nearby grasslands. At Don Edwards, decommissioned salt ponds provide expansive habitat for many waterbirds. Wandering ducks, sheldrake, and gulls flock to salt pond S16 especially, where nearly 200 species have been found. The islands in this pond provide an excellent study of gulls in the winter, and nesting Caspian and Forster’s Terns in the summer. All three teak species plus Common Gallinule can be seen in nearby Malted Sagoon. Just island from here, Buoying Owls are sometimes spotted on dirt mounds in the grassland viewable from Doc Drive. At Alviso Marina, the boardwalk crossing the

**Alviso**

The unusual topography of salt pond S2 is the result of an ambitious restoration effort by the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project. Initiated in 2008, thirty islands of varying shapes were created in the former salt pond to determine habitat preferences of nesting waterbirds. The experiment was a success, as today the pond supports nesting American Avocets, Caspian and Forster’s Terns, and Black Skimmers. Another attraction here are the salt pond birds, which can number in the tens of thousands at the peak of their migration in April. Directions: from the East Bay, cross the Dumbarton Bridge and exit at the Ravenswood National Wildlife Refuge sign. Drive the frontage road for 0.6 miles, go under the bridge, and park on the right. From the Peninsula, take Bayfront Expressway toward the Dumbarton Bridge. Exit at the Ravenswood National Wildlife Refuge sign and follow the frontage road to the parking on the left.
small brackish marsh is a reliable location for Black Rails, which are among the most secretive wetland birds in North America. The dense ground cover of brackish marsh provides one of the best habitats for this species. In the marsh, Black Rails can be heard from the patches of sedges nearby. Directions: the park is located at 55515 Highway 37 East in Richmond.

13 Benicia State Recreation Area

Tucked into a small bay on the Carquinez Strait, this park has impressive views of the strait and the grassy foothills rising above it. The salt marsh here is untouched and is home to most of the marsh birds found elsewhere in the bay. The fruiting trees in the small native botanical garden attract many birds during migration and winter. The hillside above the garden is part of Dillon Point, which is a nice place to spend an afternoon watching for raptors catching thermals overhead. Directions: the park is located at 1 State Park Road in Benicia.

14 John F. Kennedy Park

While some distance from the bay, this park maintains a connection via the Napa River which feeds into the bay. The large eucalyptus grove and marshes further downstream. Much of the park is developed but along the western perimeter of this park is a segment of the Bay Trail following the Napa River for nearly two miles. The tide is at the salt marsh here. The river is also visible here in fall and winter. An alameda of small oaks and cottonwoods line the trail and can have warblers and Oak Titmouses. When the deciduous trees along this trail lose their foliage in fall and winter, old bird nests may be revealed. Look for the hanging nest of a Bushtit or the open stick nest of a Northern Mockingbird used in breeding. Directions: parking is at the same level of the Bay Trail.

15 Hudeman Slough

Huberman Slough is one of many waterways through the rugged landscape of grain fields, vineyards, and wetlands in this area. This levee levee trails at this park. Among numerous landbirds, this park has impressive views of the strait and the grassy foothills rising above it. The salt marsh here is untouched and is home to most of the marsh birds found elsewhere in the bay. The fruiting trees in the small native botanical garden attract many birds during migration and winter. The hillside above the garden is part of Dillon Point, which is a nice place to spend an afternoon watching for raptors catching thermals overhead. Directions: the park is located at 2291 Strubell Drive in Napa.

16 Meeker Slough

The Bay Trail at this park is bordered on both sides by many slough channels and tidal mudflats. Shorebird diversity is especially reliable here at low tide, and often includes Western Gull, Spotted Sandpiper, and Pacific Golden Plover. Directions: the northern end is from the cul-de-sac on Bayshore Drive in Richmond, and at the southern end from Point Isabel Dog Park.

17 Loyola Regional Shoreline

The extensive network of trails around ritned salt ponds at this park provides ample opportunity to explore the bay near Hayward. The mosaic of uplands, sloughs, and marshes is a paradise for Northern Harriers in the daytime. The trail is at the same level of the Bay Trail. Directions: parking is at the same level of the Bay Trail.

18 China Camp State Park

China Camp State Park is a convenient, scenic getaway from the Bay Area metropolis. Salt marsh abuts hills covered in oak woodlands creating an interesting juxtaposition of habitats found a few miles further downstream. Much of the park is developed but along the western perimeter of this park is a segment of the Bay Trail following the Napa River for nearly two miles. The tide is at the salt marsh here. The river is also visible here in fall and winter. An alameda of small oaks and cottonwoods line the trail and can have warblers and Oak Titmouses. When the deciduous trees along this trail lose their foliage in fall and winter, old bird nests may be revealed. Look for the hanging nest of a Bushtit or the open stick nest of a Northern Mockingbird used in breeding seasons past. A duck pond on the entrance road is worth checking for interesting waterfowl that sometimes drop in. Directions: the park is located at 2291 Strubell Drive in Napa.

19 Corte Madera Marsh Ecological Reserve

As with many places in the bay, there is an abrupt transition from the urban sprawl to the marshes of Corte Madera Marsh Ecological Reserve. Once inside the park it is a peaceful place where the sound of clattering Ridgway’s Rails and buzzing Song Sparrows are principals of the soundscape. There is a bicycle path around the uplands and single-track trails further to the marsh and salt marsh that are worth exploring. Some of the trails are small rises above the marsh allowing a unique, close-up view of this habitat. Directions: park at Central Avenue east of Skateboard Park 101 and continue one block to the parking area at the end of this road.