

Observe

PRBO Education Programs



High school students visiting Point Reyes National Seashore learn about ecological research—and careers in field biology—from Melissa Pitkin (right). Bird drawings in a student's field journal are part of PRBO's collaborative education program in the Sacramento Valley.



Vital Connections

Melissa Pitkin, PRBO Education Coordinator

On a sunny morning in late March, a class of high school students from Corte Madera, California, joined prbo biologists and education specialists at the Muddy Hollow trail in Point Reyes National Seashore. Wilson's Warblers, recently returned from the tropics, added to the chorus of birds singing in this beautiful riparian area. As the students gathered, a Downy Woodpecker landed in a snag and began drumming.

In their field session that day, the students learned first-hand about bird banding and the role that it plays in understanding ecosystems. At a site where prbo assessed the consequences of the Mount Vision Fire—and found heightened nest success for birds in rapidly growing vegetation the following spring—the high school group also learned about the impor-

tance of natural processes such as fire to habitat quality.

While variations on this scenario are played out frequently in prbo's education program, our outreach efforts take many other forms as well. Our aim is to get people involved in new ways with the natural environment and to show them the connection to their own lives. Prbo's education programs reach people of all ages, actively engaging them in conservation. Whether they attend a weekend bird walk, come with their class on a field trip to see mist netting, participate in a teacher training workshop, volunteer to help monitor songbirds or Snowy Plovers, or plant native plants to restore riparian habitat on private ranch land, prbo is connecting people to the natural world. With continued education, this connection will foster a

lifelong appreciation and concern for conserving wildlife and habitats.

Working in partnership

Emulating the approach taken by prbo's scientific programs, our education program has been forging new partnerships over the last few years. Links with other organizations broaden our audience and ensure that conservation education will consistently be accessible to people of all ages. An exciting new collaboration with The Bay Institute and the Center For Ecoliteracy has enabled prbo to make connections with more than 15 environmental education organizations in the Bay Area. We are forming new partnerships outside the Bay Area as well, and now have cooperative education and outreach programs linked with a variety of prbo's research pro-

continued on page 2

Together with 16 other Joint Venture representatives from around the country...

▼ From our Executive Director

Ellie Goes to Washington

Ellie M. Cohen

As a board member of both the San Francisco Bay and Central Valley Habitat Joint Ventures (see article on page 4), prbo is among a small handful of research organizations bringing sound science to the growing number of habitat acquisition, restoration, and adaptive management initiatives in California.

I recently returned from an exciting and very successful visit to Washington, D.C. to educate policy makers about our work. Together with 16 other Joint Venture (jv) representatives from around the country, I attended meetings with the staff of dozens of members of Congress, the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on the Interior, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service including Director Jamie Clark.

The trip brought a new level of awareness on Capitol Hill about the

impressive record of the Joint Ventures in delivering cost-effective wetlands, waterfowl, and shorebird conservation initiatives nationwide while conveying the dire need for an increase in basic operational funding. Our presence also illustrated the unusual diversity of this effective alliance, which brings together private and public interests to achieve common goals: ranchers, farmers, hunters, ecologists, biologists and conservationists, private landowners and business interests as well as federal, state and local government agencies.

The responses were overwhelmingly positive. Everyone was quite impressed by the fact that more than \$1.5 billion in funds for wetlands and wildlife conservation projects across the country were leveraged from only \$32 million invested through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in jv funding since 1988. As a result, over 4.5 million acres



Ellie Cohen

of wetlands have been restored. They were also excited about the new directions of the jv's: to expand beyond a wetlands

focus to include a broader ecosystem and "all birds" approach.

The Joint Venture approach is the premier model for successful ecosystem conservation at the dawn of the 21st century in the U.S. and could well become the vehicle for delivering major new national conservation initiatives. Ultimately, prbo's participation in the Joint Ventures will help to ensure that the enormous resources invested in the growing number of restoration and management projects will result in healthy, functioning ecosystems and the greatest possible biodiversity.



Connections *from page 1*

grams. For example, an innovative education program has grown out of our Sacramento Valley riparian project, involving public and non-profit conservation and education organizations in the region.

Prbo also educates people at land management levels. Based on results of our scientific studies, Prbo biologists make written recommendations for private landowners, land managers, and government agencies. We are producing a series of flyers that focus on ways to make your backyard, ranch, or orchard appropriate songbird habitat.

These are available on our website, www.prbo.org, or by calling prbo at (415) 868-1221, extension 10. In addition, prbo biologists have helped write the Riparian Bird Conservation Plan for California. The Plan provides land managers, funders, agencies, and con-



PRBO intern Missy Wipf helps lead our cooperative project on private rangeland in the northern San Francisco Bay Area—**STRAW**, or Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed.

servation organizations with numerous land use recommendations geared toward promoting conservation and restoration of riparian habitat. In the inter-

mountain western U.S., prbo is contributing to the production of a flyer providing private landowners with specific recommendations on how to manage sagebrush habitats for birds (see page 5).

Another important aspect of prbo's far-reaching education efforts

is our field biologist training program. In the last 30 years prbo internships have given hundreds of college graduates from all over the world advanced skills in field ornithology. The experience and knowledge our interns gain are invaluable when they pursue careers in conservation biology or wildlife management or prepare for graduate studies. Every year approximately 200 applicants apply for the 20 positions offered, a testament to the reputation of prbo's program.

In the following pages you can learn more about prbo's education and outreach efforts. In a time when schools and communities are increasingly making environmental education and awareness a priority, prbo will continue expanding our education and outreach programs, using birds to teach conservation principles to as broad an audience as possible.



...before long the girl who didn't really like birds all that much was hooked.

▼ *Serving—and gaining from—a PRBO internship*

Island Reflections

**Paige Martin, Seabird Research Coordinator,
Channel Islands National Park**

A PRBO internship in 1990–91 changed the course of Paige Martin's career. Having worked for five years at Archbold Biological Station in her native Florida—on tortoises, snakes, lizards, and small mammals—Paige was ready for a “busman's holiday” on Southeast Farallon Island. Today she directs a seabird research program (in which PRBO cooperates)!—Editor

As I motor out of Ventura Harbor aboard the National Park Service vessel *Ocean Ranger*, headed for my eighth field season on the Channel Islands, I reflect on my metamorphosis from a Florida turtle biologist into a Park Service seabird biologist.

It was in late December 1990 when I arrived on Southeast Farallon Island to shepherd elephant seals in their breeding colony and watch the everyday miracles of life and death. Bill Sydeman (prbo's Director of Marine Sciences) also assigned me a winter project on Western Gulls on the island, and before long the girl who didn't really like birds all that much was hooked. Bill asked if I would like to stay for the seabird nesting season. *Would I?* I said yes.

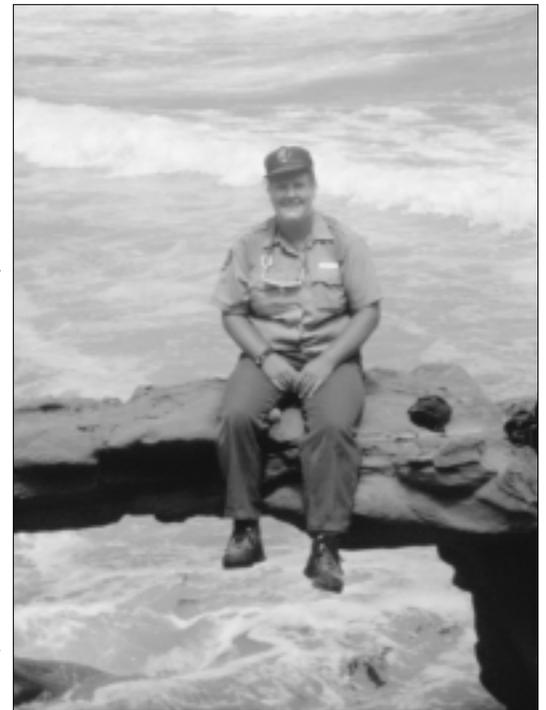
That spring I read gull bands and watched murrelets love their eggs. I climbed up and down from the Murre

Blind (rock climbing was a novel concept to a Floridian). Perched atop Shubrick Point, I could watch Pigeon Guillemots sing and Tufted Puffins fly by. Some days we would gaze out at the North Farallones. Other days, when the fog was thick, we couldn't even see Sugarloaf a few hundred yards away.

I left the Farallones and returned to Florida but before long was working on Skuas in the Antarctic. I returned to prbo for a second seabird season in 1992, when warm ocean El Niño conditions made things very grim compared to the the previous year's bounty of plump seabirds.

My experience on Southeast Farallon Island led me to love working on seabirds—especially the fact that something is always going on in the colony. You just have to look around to find out what it is. When a position for seabird biologist at Channel Islands National Park opened, I applied. All of a sudden I was given the opportunity to run my own seabird program, monitoring birds on different islands and teaching people about them. I could pass along what I learned at the Farallones.

Today the *Ocean Ranger* is nearing Santa Barbara Island, and I will soon be climbing around looking for nesting murrelets, counting



Paige Martin at home in the Channel Islands.

nesting cormorants, and watching California Brown Pelicans (whose chicks make for some of the best colony watching of all).

As you read this, think of me sitting on a green carpet one mile square surrounded by yellow *Coreopsis* flowers and watching grey whales swim north to their summer place. This is much different than the Farallones, but I can't think of a better place to be than Santa Barbara Island in the spring.



Where Are They Now? Following up with a few of PRBO's past interns

Nancy Reed, a past Palomarin bander and now a senior biologist for the Department of Defense, earned national recognition for wildlife management at Vandenberg Air Force Base in Southern California. Vandenberg hosts some of the state's healthiest, most diverse populations of migrant and endangered birds.

Matt Johnson, a bander in 1993, recently completed his PhD at Tulane University, studying the overwinter ecology of

neotropical migratory birds. Matt currently teaches ornithology at Humboldt State University.

Ken Warheit worked both at Palomarin and on the Farallones at PRBO through the early 1980s. His doctoral research at U.C. Berkeley combined paleontology and biology. Ken is currently a senior scientist with Washington State Department of Wildlife.

George Wallace, a bander in 1984, has been conducting state-

of-the-art research on the avifauna of Cuba for more than ten years. He recently completed his PhD at University of Missouri and began a new position with the Florida Department of Wildlife.

Catherine Hickey was a Palomarin intern in 1993 and then a PRBO staff biologist in the Wetlands Program. Currently completing her masters degree at University of California at Davis, Catherine has also spent a year working at Manomet

Center for Conservation on the National Shorebird Conservation Plan. She is now back at PRBO to assist in our new San Francisco Bay project.

Peter Paton completed an internship with PRBO and went on to work on bird conservation for the USDA Forest Service in Hawaii and Arcata, California. His doctoral research was on Snowy Plovers, and now Peter is a professor of biology at the University of Rhode Island.

Prbo's perspective will help broaden our focus to include more species of birds.

▼ PRBO Joins the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture

Shared Interests in Wetlands

Bob Shaffer, Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture Coordinator

Bob Shaffer is a wetlands specialist who has worked for the Federal Government on resource issues since 1978 and has held his present post since early 1999.—Editor

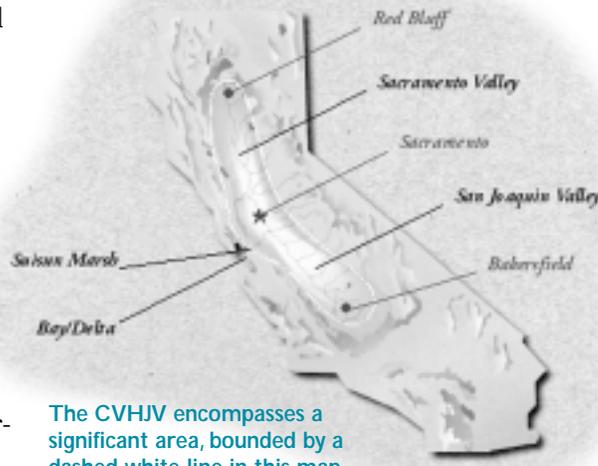
On behalf of the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture Management (cvhvjv) Board, I extend a hearty welcome to prbo, our newest partner on the Board. We are pleased to have Executive Director Ellie Cohen represent prbo and Geoff Geupel serve as alternate Board member.

The cvhvjv, a public-private partnership of 16 agencies and conservation organizations (see box below) has a history of successful habitat conservation. As we continue our work in this new century, prbo will provide enthusiasm and scientific expertise.

The Joint Venture was established in 1988 as a component of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, a treaty among the governments of Canada, the United States, and Mexico aimed at restoring waterfowl populations to early 1970s levels. In 1986, the Central Valley was identified under the Plan as one of

the original six priority waterfowl habitat areas. Shortly thereafter, waterfowl and wetlands specialists pooled their knowledge to craft the Implementation Plan that has since guided our efforts.

Prbo biologists have been members of the cvhvjv's Technical Committee since the early 1990s, encouraging the development of shorebird habitat as a component of our wetland projects. In 1991, the Joint Venture helped sponsor prbo's Pacific Flyway Project. This study



The CVHJV encompasses a significant area, bounded by a dashed white line in this map.

documented shorebird use patterns in Central Valley wetlands and farmlands and provided biological support for designation of the Grasslands Ecological Area of Merced County (160,000 acres of contiguous wetland and upland habitat) as a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network site.

Prbo's perspective will help the cvhvjv broaden our focus to include more species of birds. In addition to wetland conservation objectives, our shared interests include implementation of the following programs: a) the Riparian Bird Conservation Plan in California, concentrating on songbird habitat that has been reduced by over 90%; b) the California Private Lands Conservation Program, which will seek to implement the multi-species recommendations of Partners in Flight bird

conservation plans, through diverse private lands partnerships; and c) the Conservation and Restoration of California's Grasslands, which will assess the results of various management treatments in Central Valley habitats for declining populations of grassland birds.

Next steps

These are exciting times for bird conservation, and the cvhvjv is poised to expand its role. The North American Waterfowl Management Plan Update, released last year, calls for broadening partnerships, viewing conservation in a landscape approach, and ensuring that all efforts have a sound biological basis. We are now incorporating this guidance in work to protect, restore, and enhance habitat for migratory waterfowl and other wetland-dependent species.

Concurrently, the North American Bird Conservation Initiative—to “deliver the full spectrum of bird conservation through regionally-based, biologically-driven, landscape-oriented partnerships”—is gaining steam. It seeks to help integrate individual bird conservation efforts in order to increase their effectiveness. Its implementation will rely on established programs such as the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and Partners in Flight, as well as new programs such as the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan and the North American Colonial Waterbird Conservation Plan. Though not yet in place, this initiative represents a very promising blueprint for integrated, international bird conservation.

In this context, the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture will soon begin updating our own Implementation Plan. As a voting member of the Management Board, prbo is in a position to help shape cvhvjv policy and direction as we expand our vision, in accordance with the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Welcome aboard!



CVHJV Management Board

Board Members:

American Farmland Trust
California Waterfowl Association
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
National Audubon Society
Point Reyes Bird Observatory
The Nature Conservancy
The Trust for Public Land

Ex-Officio Board Members:

CA Department of Fish and Game
CA Department of Water Resources
CA Wildlife Conservation Board
US Bureau of Land Management
US Bureau of Reclamation
US Army Corps of Engineers
US Environmental Protection Agency
US Fish and Wildlife Service
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

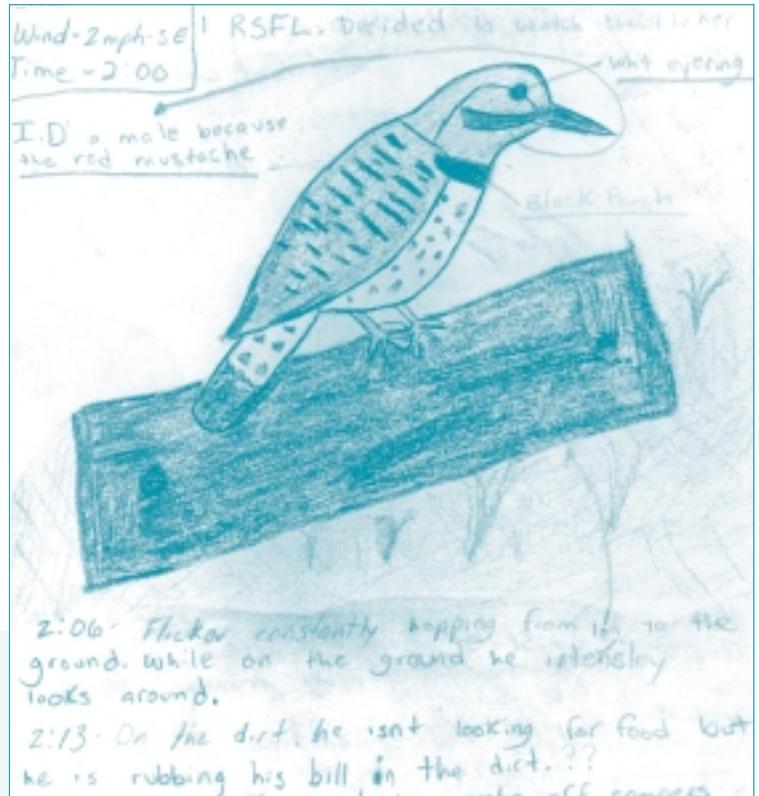
▼ Education and outreach take many forms at PRBO

Connecting People with Conservation



Left: Pete Goldman (right) trains volunteers in methods for songbird monitoring.

Right: Field notes and bird identification are featured in a PRBO workshop for high school students in California's Sacramento Valley.



Volunteer Monitoring

Melissa Pitkin, PRBO Education Coordinator

An exceptional cooperative project with prbo has begun, thanks to the volunteer efforts of Pete Goldman. A retired biology professor from Truman State University in Missouri who recently relocated in the San Francisco Bay Area, Pete is concerned with the conservation of songbirds. To monitor songbird populations on public lands in Berkeley and Oakland, he has recruited and trained some 40 volunteers. Pete also selected and measured study plots, classified habitat types, and provided maps to help volunteers conduct area searches of breeding birds. The project will provide valuable information on bird populations to land managers and also involve people directly in conservation through research opportunities. This is a successful model that has benefited major prbo projects and involved numerous volunteers. (We thank prbo volunteers on page 10 and 11 of this *Observer*). For more information on the East Bay Songbird Monitoring Project, contact Pete Goldman at pcgoldman@hotmail.com, or by phone at (510) 649-9029.



Habitat Guide

A new informational flyer, *Landowner Tips: Keeping Birds in the Sagebrush Sea*, will help private landowners preserve bird communities in the sagebrush habitats of eastern Oregon and Washington, northern Nevada, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. The flyer is being produced through partnerships among PRBO, American Bird Conservancy, National Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, Ravenworks Ecology, and numerous state and federal agencies. It explains the ecology of the *shrub-steppe* (sagebrush shrubland and grassland) and provides 60 specific recommendations designed to help achieve 24 bird-oriented management goals. Current threats to shrub-steppe bird populations include grazing, water developments, invasion of exotic plant species, habitat fragmentation, farming, insecticides, fire, recreation, and residential development. Thanks to our strong partnerships and the dedication of Sharon Ritter and Christine Paige of the Western Working Group of Partners in Flight, *Landowner Tips* will soon be distributed to interested private landowners throughout the shrub-steppe region. For more information, contact Aaron Holmes at (415) 868-1221, extension 50. — Aaron Holmes, PRBO Biologist

Songbird Outreach

Stacy Small, PRBO Biologist

The Sacramento Valley Riparian Songbird Habitat Outreach Project, a collaboration between prbo and the Sacramento River Discovery Center, utilizes field work and in-class workshops to teach bird observation skills and conservation concepts to students and community members of all ages. One of our most popular sessions is a four-hour bird identification workshop, whose centerpiece is the field journal (two samples are shown above and on page 1). The workshop starts indoors, with detailed observation and sketching of study skins; continues in the field, where participants document bird behaviors and habitats; and ends with a discussion of riparian conservation. High school students keep their journals and elaborate on them throughout the school year. Four of our most promising students continued with summer 1999 internships that included nest monitoring and creation of a documentary video.



Our role as sister parks will figure strongly in helping create Georgian parks.

▼ *International connections*

New Parks for the Republic of Georgia

Sarah Allen, PhD, PRBO Research Associate, & Don Neubacher, Superintendent, Point Reyes National Seashore

This dispatch, filed in autumn 1999 after the authors' return from the former USSR, exemplifies educational outreach on an international scale. Sarah Allen, based at Point Reyes National Seashore, is Science Advisor for the western region of the National Park Service.—Editor

Our caravan of two four-wheel drive vehicles and ten people bumped along a dirt road in the Republic of Georgia, following a high ridgeback that looked over the sweeping expanse of Vashlavani National Park to the borders of Iran and Azerbaijan. Within just a half-hour of travel, our heads grew dizzy from swiveling our binoculars to identify 'life birds' for many of us—a Tawny Eagle, an Imperial Eagle, several Griffen Vultures, and a raven relative, the Rook.

We were a team of five U.S. National Park Service advisors, a World Bank representative, the manager and ornithologist of the Vashlavani National Park, and his nine-year-old daughter, who brought out the educator in each of us. Our goal was to help the Republic of Georgia establish and support a national park service of its own.

Formerly part of the Soviet Union, the Republic of Georgia is about the size of West Virginia but possesses extraordinary biological and geological diversity. The country extends from the Black Sea up to the highest peaks of the Caucasus Mountains, and it lies along the Silk Road between Europe and Asia.

The nascent republic is in a flurry of creating new legislation and recently began work to institute a national park system that will create new parks and protect existing natural areas. One of the newly established parks is the Kolkheti National Park on the Black Sea, a sister park to Point Reyes National Seashore. Among our four sister parks in the Republic of Georgia

to date are Lagodecki, a forest preserve in the Caucasus foothills (sister to Grand Tetons National Park) and Vashlavani (sister to Badlands National Park).

Our role as sister parks will figure strongly in helping Georgian parks create infrastructure, education/interpretive programs, and biological monitoring programs in the future. Items the new republic needs range from uniforms and field guides to binoculars and trucks. The government is poor in capital but rich in spirit and dedication. Many of the people we met had not received a salary in months but were passionately dedicated, striving to preserve the natural treasures of the country before economic pressures forced the lands to be logged, mined, or developed.

Paata Khumarashvili, our World Bank representative, guide, translator, and friend, has a degree in landscape design and waxed eloquent on preservation of landscapes. We often discussed the parallels between what the Georgians are striving to accomplish and how early U.S. conservationists such as John Muir promoted preservation of our first national parks.

On this summer 1999 trip, we began helping the Georgian Division of Protected Areas (pad, equivalent to the U.S. National Park Service) draft a mission statement, a new organizational structure with expanded roles and responsibilities, and a strategy for implementing the program. In preparing the document, we met with personnel from the Ministry of Environment and pad, members of the World Bank, usaid, Georgian scientists from the University at Tbilisi (the capital city), managers of



Sarah Allen and the daughter of a Republic of Georgia ornithologist examine a tortoise before releasing it in Vashlavani National Park.

existing protected areas, and the head of Georgia's Parliament, Zhuvania. The vision is strong in the Georgian government to protect these natural treasures while at the same time enhancing the economy through tourism.

Our visit to Vashlavani took place during a break from meetings in the city. Dropping down the ridge through a pass, we followed a dry riverbed at its foot. We sighted the nesting caves of Griffen Vultures hundreds of feet up in the expansive cliffs; identified a total of 26 bird species; and at one point, to our surprise, found a tortoise struggling upside-down in the riverbed. Our guides informed us that eagles often gather up tortoises and drop them from a great height to break open shells, much as gulls do with clams. Indeed the tortoise had a large but not life-threatening hole in its shell. We righted it, provided an offering of fruit from a native pomegranate (which we also indulged in eating), and then piled back into our caravan for the ride home. Our driver played a tape cassette of the western pop group Eurythmics, and by the time we got back to Vashlavani, our nine-year-old ambassador had memorized all of the words to "I saved the world today."



▼ New trends in philanthropy

Gifts that Benefit PRBO and Donors

In our ongoing effort to educate our readers about philanthropy, the following article, excerpted from the February 29, 2000 edition of the San Francisco Chronicle, introduces the Charitable Gift Endowment. Now available through three financial institutions—Charles Schwab, Fidelity, and Vanguard—the Charitable Endowment Fund allows donors to designate donations to their favorite charities, like PRBO, and it offers great tax savings and flexibility. If you are interested in learning more about contributing to PRBO through a Charitable Endowment Fund, please contact your investment advisor or the financial services firms below.—Terri Miller, Development Director

The booming economy and skyrocketing stock prices have created a surge in income for millions of Americans, many of whom are looking for the best way to contribute some of their new-found wealth to charities like prbo. To serve this expanding philanthropic market, three financial service companies have introduced what are known as Charitable Endowment Funds.

While the three funds differ in details, most notably the minimum amounts that individuals can contribute, all are designed to make charitable giving hassle-free and tax-efficient.

One enticing feature of the Charitable Fund is that it permits donors to contribute to virtually any charity of their choice. The donor selects the charities and the funds send out the donations and do all the paperwork!

Participants in a Charitable Fund can make tax-free contributions of either cash or securities. If they contribute securities that have appreciated in value since they were purchased, donors are entitled to a tax deduction for the full value and are excused from paying capital gains taxes on the appreciation.

Each individual who donates to a Charitable Fund can choose from an array of mutual funds in which the money will be invested, pending donation to charity.

Although donors can claim a charitable tax deduction as soon as they put money in the fund, they are permitted to spend weeks, months, even years deciding which charities they want to contribute to.

Meanwhile, if the mutual funds do their jobs right, the original donations will grow, increasing the money available for groups like prbo!

If you think a Charitable Endowment Fund may be a good alternative for meeting your philanthropic objectives, contact your financial advisor or one of the financial services firms below. And don't forget to designate prbo as one of your charities of choice!

PHILANTHROPIC FUN FACTS

Charitable giving in the U.S. surpassed the \$190 billion mark in 1999. ■ Of all money donated to charitable organizations in 1999, 83.8% was given by individuals, 10.4% by foundations and 5.8% by corporations. ■ Personal giving rose by nearly \$11.63 billion in 1999, accounting for nearly 3/4 of the increase in overall giving. ■ Gifts from living individuals increased by 7.2% and gifts from bequests rose by 14.6%.

From: *Giving USA 2000*. To order a complete copy, call 888-5-giving or log on to www.aafrc.org.

Charitable Endowment Funds

Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund,
(800) 682-4438, www.charitablegift.org

Schwab Fund for Charitable Giving, (800)
746-6216, www.schwabcharitable.org

Vanguard Charitable Endowment Program,
(888) 383-4483



▼ Behind the scenes

PRBO Staff Migrations

This spring prbo bade a fond farewell to outgoing Office Manager **Laura Williams**. Having served on our staff for nearly five years—as Farallon Patrol coordinator, Board liaison, events organizer, and much more—Laura brought abundant energy and good humor to prbo. She also fell in love with birding here, counted in our Bird-A-Thon, and volunteered in field biology on the Farallon Islands! We all join in wishing Laura the best in her exploration of new career opportunities.

New and welcome in our front office is **Melissa Frakes**, prbo's Office Manager as of April 2000. Strong skills and a positive outlook make Melissa a great addi-

tion to our staff. Her prior position, in San Francisco, was Office Administrator for the Asia Foundation's Books for Asia program. Says Melissa, "The people and the setting of prbo are nearly as great as the mission of prbo."

Now serving her first term of duty on Southeast Farallon Island is biologist **Christine Abraham**, a native of Canada. She earned her masters degree from the University of Manitoba in 1999, studying American White Pelicans. Prbo's Director of Marine Research, Bill Sydeman, notes that "Christine's academic accomplishments and great enthusiasm for seabird research make her a great member of our Farallon team."



Melissa Frakes

Also joining our science staff is **Viola Toniolo**, prbo's Riparian Habitat Conservationist. Her position has been newly created in partnership with the Marin Resource Conservation District and Natural Resource Conservation Service and funded by The National Fish and Wildlife

Foundation and California Department of Fish and Game. Viola's chief responsibility will be helping private landowners and ranchers in Marin County, California, with riparian restoration activities that benefit birds. She reports that she looks forward to sharing her passion for birds and conservation with a diverse agricultural community.



▼ *The PRBO Observer's Action Page*

Get Involved!

For safer landings by our Farallon Island researchers, PRBO's Board of Directors recently purchased and donated this sturdy Zodiac vessel. Ewan Macdonald spearheaded the generous effort, with contributions from Will Price, Jack



Ladd, Stuart Jacobson, Ann Stone, and Mike Parmeter. Here, prior to launch, young Claire Sydeman and Joseph Ladd show the new boat with their respective fathers Bill Sydeman (left), PRBO Marine Sciences Director, and Jack Ladd, Chair of our active and involved Board. Thank you!

You Can Make a Difference!

This new Observer feature delivers practical guidelines in science-based conservation. Let us know what you think! Contact Education Coordinator Melissa Pitkin at (415) 868-1221 ext. 30 or mpitkin@prbo.org.

Did you know?

Many songbirds build their nest, lay their eggs and raise their young in just one month!

Cats kill an estimated 4.4 million songbirds each year!

Beaches are valuable habitat supporting many shorebird species year-round!

Improperly placed nest boxes can help Starlings and House Sparrows instead of the species they're meant for!

Eucalyptus trees kill songbirds! The sap produced in cones clogs the nostrils of many North American songbirds, causing them to suffocate!

How you can help:

→ **Refrain from mowing** tall grasses, clearing dense vegetation, or removing dead trees and limbs during the breeding season (mid-March–July). On PRBO's website, www.prbo.org, see "Beyond the Birdfeeder" for more about helping songbirds on your land.

→ **Keep cats as indoor pets** only, refrain from feeding stray cats, and support local Humane Societies. And see "Cats Indoors" at www.audubon.org/bird/cat/index.

→ **Keep dogs on leashes**, and support the designation of some beaches as wildlife habitat.

→ **Follow guidelines** for placing nest boxes provided by National Audubon Society (www.audubon.org) or the North American Bluebird Society (nabluebird@aol.com).

→ **Consider using native plants**, trees, and shrubs when landscaping and creating windblocks, and remove eucalyptus from you land. For more background, see Rich Stallcup's "Focus" column in *Observer* 108, Fall 1996.

Farallon Patrol Log

Our thanks to these volunteer Farallon Patrol skippers who have provided prbo with transportation to our Farallon Island field station (also to those whose trips were cancelled due to foul weather)!

Jan 26	Tom Charkins	<i>Kumbaya</i>
Feb 19	Rick Boyce	<i>Paloma</i>
Mar 3	Henry Corning	<i>Meadowsweet</i>
Mar 11	Alex Pop-Lazic	<i>Tamo Daleko</i>
Mar 19	Mike Alfred	<i>The Big Guy</i>
Apr 1	Alex Pop-Lazic	<i>Tamo Daleko</i>
Apr 8	John Gratton	<i>Nakia</i>
Apr 15	Doug Engelke	<i>It's A Wonderful Life</i>
Apr 22	Dick Honey	<i>La Baleine</i>
May 6	Dick Sponholz	<i>Kielia</i>
May 20	Paul Dine	<i>The Office</i>
Jun 3	John Wade	<i>Starbuck</i>



You can **researchers** **help** **and students** **in Latin America!**

Donate equipment to *Birders' Exchange*, and help meet the needs of scientists, conservationists & educators in Latin America & the Caribbean.

Needed: binoculars, scopes, etcetera in good working order. Also field guides, laptop computers, backpacks.

Bring donations to prbo, or **mail** them to: Lina DiGregorio / Birders' Exchange
American Birding Association
P.O. Box 6599
Colorado Springs, CO 80934

You can also **serve as a courier** on your next trip to Latin America!

See: www.americanbirding.org/consbex

F O C U S

Listing for Life



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Rich Stallcup, PRBO Conservation Outreach

Building bird lists, at any level, can be a great pastime and even the passion of a lifetime. My friend Phoebe Snetsinger, a wife, mother of four, and retired school teacher, set out to bird the world virtually nonstop some 17 years ago—right after being diagnosed with an “imminently” fatal disease. Her life list reached about 8,500 bird species, nearly 2,000 more than anyone else’s and 85% of Earth’s known avifauna. She was 68 years old and birding strong when she died in a van crash in Madagascar last November.

Most birders and even ornithologists keep some kind of running lists—life, world, lower 48 states, state, county, yard, patch. Lists are ways to categorize, collect, and organize real-life successes connecting with different kinds of free and wild birds. Listing is a great game, maybe the greatest. For some, it becomes an obsession that drives all conscious thought and action. (Perhaps a “listers anonymous” group would save a few marriages and friendships.) For some it is a fanciful game of fill-in-the-blanks. For some it becomes a blueprint for scientific investigation.

Geographics

Not everyone can excel at global or continental endeavors, but scaling down spatially (even barely leaving home) can provide equally great inspiration. Many feel that finding a new bird in their own patch (a place of any size where you specialize) is as fine as seeing ten species somewhere far away.

Keeping track of all species you find in your own state is fun and educational, so keeping track in every state is 50 times as great! The smaller the area, the more meticulous and

thorough one may become. Whether yard, park, city, county—for competition or simply to record—it should all be with joy.

In the early 1970s, a (very) few of us, wanting a change from predictable revisits to our usual California birding haunts, decided that it would be fun and educational to go find 100+ species in each of the state’s 58 counties. Not only



Checklists might provide a starting place....

can such a discipline cause you to visit places otherwise overlooked and become a geography wizard en route (you will know where all the cemeteries and sewer ponds are), but by the conclusion you’ll have first-hand knowledge of avian distribution.

Yard listing can be great if you have a great yard. One yard at Bolinas, California, has a list of 276 species, and one at Cape May, New Jersey, has just over 300. Those are huge, but it’s really OK to be proud of your 20-year yard list of 33 species. Keep watching!

Games and the Big Gasp

Adding a time constraint in any geographic area creates even more listing challenges. *Year lists* are the rage, be they North America, state, county, or patch, and you get to start with a clean slate every January first. So far, *month lists* have not caught on, but they certainly will with the ever-growing legion of birders seeking new challenges. Month listing will sharpen knowledge of arrival dates for migrants.

The *Big Day* is cool and a great challenge: 24 hours anywhere you care to go for the highest possible species total. Careful planning and military-like execution are crucial for success, whether that means defeating competition, breaking a standing record, establishing a personal best, or raising money for Bird-A-Thon. Big Days with transportation limits—on foot, by boat, on camel, etcetera—are just as exciting. Once, four of us found

159 bird species on a late-April day while walking ten miles from Olema, California, to Limantour Beach in the Point Reyes National Seashore. Wisely, we had left a car at the far end.

Another Big Day variation is the *Big Sit*. It too is limited to 24 hours or less, but the listers stay put inside a 12-foot-diameter circle and watch the show. At Tomales Bay in coastal Marin County, California, we once established a Big Sit record with 114 species but were soon soundly throttled by sitters at Point Pelee, Ontario.

Some players do *Big Hours* or *Big Foot Hours* mostly for the excitement and to compete against themselves. The *Big Minute* doesn’t take much preparation, and you don’t have to pack a lunch, but it’s important to be in a really good spot at the word “Go.” In the 1960s we experimented with the *Big Gasp*—hyperventilating before saying “Go....” Luckily, the idea died before any of the participants did.

Listing birds is what you make it. Some people are obviously over-listy, caring more about numbers than the actual animals and their habitats. Others decry listing as trifling folly (just before exclaiming how they reached 700 species in North America on their recent Alaska trip). But most are somewhere in between—having fun at what they love and spending spirited time in the field, where the birds are.



FINDINGS from PRBO research

Grazing Impacts

Aaron Holmes, PRBO Biologist

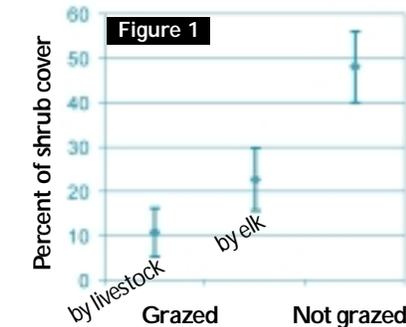
Prbo recently completed an analysis of songbird habitat associations in coastal scrub habitats, to provide Point Reyes National Seashore and Golden Gate National Recreation Area with increased understanding for wildlife management. We investigated songbird distribution and abundance as related to habitat alterations caused by disturbance from grazing (having also provided National Park Service managers with findings on the effects of disturbance from wildfire).

The project described here began with data collection in three representative areas (30 sites in each): coastal scrub/prairie on Point Reyes, the Tomales Point Elk Preserve, and coastal scrub that had not been grazed by livestock since the late 1970s. Along with monitoring birds, we measured characteristics of the vegetation such as cover, height, and species diversity of both shrubs and herbaceous plants.

We found that the most important habitat variable explaining patterns of distribution and abundance of songbirds in coastal scrub was the amount of shrub cover. Long-term grazing pre-



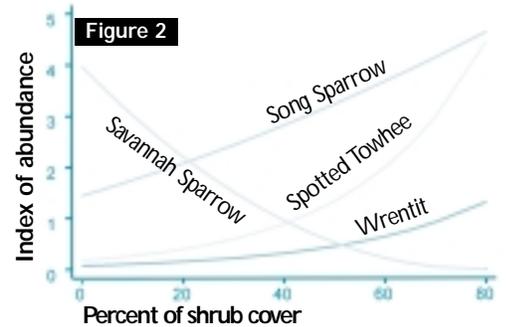
Wrentit



cludes establishment of a dense shrub layer, a phenomenon observed along several fencelines that separate grazed and ungrazed pastures near the Seashore's southern boundary.

Figure 1 shows our finding that shrub cover is greatest in areas with no grazing and lowest in areas grazed by cattle. Figure 2 shows a negative relationship between amount of shrub cover and Savannah Sparrow abundance but a positive relationship for Wrentit, Spotted Towhee, and Song Sparrow.

Grassland species such as Savannah Sparrow and Western Meadowlark benefit from the increased grassland habitat that results from livestock grazing. Brown-headed Cowbird, a nest parasite, also occurs in greater abundance in both the elk- and cattle-grazed habitats. For species that depend on a dense shrub layer—Wrentit, Song



Sparrow, and Spotted Towhee—grazing results in reduced abundance. These birds become restricted to remnant pockets of shrub or may be eliminated from extensive areas, as is the case on much of the Point Reyes peninsula.

Overall, diversity of songbirds was higher at ungrazed sampling points and tended to be higher on the Elk Preserve than on lands grazed by cattle. During 1997 and 1998, an average of 13 species occurred in the cattle-grazed areas, 20.5 species in the Elk Preserve, and 22 species in the ungrazed habitat.

Other concerns involved in the issue of grazing in our coastal national parks include survival of rare plant populations and control of exotic, weedy species. Prbo results will help land managers make informed decisions to enhance bird diversity over the long term.



Adapted from a scientific paper presented to The Wildlife Society.

1999 Volunteers

PRBO relies on volunteers in all our programs and projects. We thank the following individuals who assisted with data collection throughout last year.

Central Coast Project:
Gary L. Allen, Sandy Baron, Bonnie Bedzin, Eli Bernstein, Linda Brodman, Martha Brown, Shelley Buranek, Stu Branoff, Nanda Currant, Sus Danner, Toni Danzig, David Ekdahl, Winifred Frick, Julie Hendricks, Jennifer

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Snowy Plover Project:
Brian Acord, Don Adams, Jean Adams,

Wade and Barbara Akle, Tom Applegate & Phil Persons, Marjorie Bourret, Ron Branson, Steve Braun, Bob Brotherton, Amy Burnett, Ken Burton, Kate Carolan, Lisa Cassidy, Ed & Paula Clark, Judith Coburn, Christine Collier & Jill Terp, Paul Coopersmith, Lynn Cropper, Jack Dineen, Dave Dixon, Lisa Eichler, Pat Ferris & Irwin Woldman, Brian Foster, Daniel George, Marilyn Green, Sue Guers, Donald Gunn, Bob Hansen, Fred Hanson, Syd & Jay

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Matthew Anderson, Joanne Berthiaume, Ken

Burton, Jim Destabler, Moe Flannery, Katie Fehring, Dan Froehlich, Sue Guers, Gretchen Honan, Robin Leong, Bucky Mace, Amy McAndrews, Alanna McDonald, Mike Parmeter, Sheri Rice, Sawyer Riley, Courtney Sherwood, Maria Silkey, Sophie Webb, Janet Wessel

San Francisco Bay Project: Matthew Anderson, Elizabeth Brusati, John Budrick, Maria De Angelo, Joshua Moody, Sussan Riddle, Larry Small, Tina Tucker

Memberships

Our thanks to the following new members who joined prbo from February through April 2000.

American Bald Eagle Foundation, The Appelbaum Family, Ms. Margaret Lee Blunt, Mr. Dennis Cavallo, M.D., John & Maria Cunningham, Ms. Suzanne Dawkins, Cecile Derouin, Mr. Donald Dod, Ms. Sharon B. Duvall, Ms. Linda C. Dye, Mr. L. Newton Goodwell, Ms. Judith J. Hartwig, Ms. Margaret A. Hinebaugh, Macauley Hughes, Susan M. Ivey, Simone Jenion, Kenneth E. Jones, Ms. Mary Ellen King, Stephen & Kathleen Linowski, Ms. Rachel Mazur, K. Murgatroyd, Franchesca R. & David L. Napier, Ms. Karen M. Nichols, Ms. Joan E. Olafson, Mr. Trent Orr, Yen Sha Pan, Ms. Sarah Plotkin, Frances Ramos, Mr. Allen Sanford, Ms. Emily Serkin, Ms. Cynthia Shafer, Mr. Ian Taylor, Ms. Carol A. Thorp, Susan Turek, Brian Viani, Douglas & Suzanne C. Watkins, Lin E. Welden.

Contributions

We are grateful to the following contributors of gifts of \$250 or more (February through May 15, 2000).

Mr. & Mrs. Peter Avenali, Mr. Charles Brownold, Peter & Mimi Buckley, Dr. Howard Cogswell, Dr. Jean W. Cohn, Mr. Oscar R. Cook, Ms. Pamela A. Cook & Mr. Paul Gietzel, Preston Cook, Mr. Thomas R. Davis & Ellyn Bush, Ms. Mary J. Decker, Mr. Demetrios Dimitriou, Ms. Sharon B. Duvall, Mr. Theodore L. Eliot, Jr., Gregory & Roberta Favis, Myriam & Joel Fontaine, Marcia & Richard Grand, Ms. Margaret Duncan Greene, Mr. & Mrs. Totton Heffelfinger, Ms. Harriet Heyman, Ms. Nancy Hult-Ganis, Mrs. Dorothy B. Hunt, Mr. Stuart Jacobson, Mr. Arthur H. Kern, Charles & Mimi Lowrey, Mr. Ewan Macdonald, Marin Audubon Society, McCutchen Doyle Brown & Enerson, LLP, Mr. Jeffery W. Meyer, Mr. A. Hadley Osborne, Mr. Peter Parham, Dr. & Mrs. Benjamin D. Parmeter, M.D., Marjorie & Theodore Plant, Mr. & Mrs. W. J. Price, Mr. Scot Rohrer, Mrs. Jean Stallcup, Jack & Jane Stupp, Mr. & Mrs. Stephen A. Thal, Mr. & Mrs. Alan A. Tobey, Mr. & Mrs. James Wintersteen, Anonymous, Anonymous stock gift.

Memorial Funds

We appreciate the following gifts to prbo (February through May 15, 2000):

in memory of Dr. Clarence Chrisp: Richard & Beth Andrulis

In memory of Graham Moody: McCutchen, Doyle, Brown & Enerson, LLP

In memory of Mildred Silberberg: John Molloy

In memory of Sandy Tomlinson: Helen & Gil Cohen

Friends of the Farallones

The following prbo friends direct their support to our projects in the Farallon Island National Wildlife Refuge. Many thanks!

Abbey Party Rents, George & Ruth Bradford Foundation, Rev. Bruce G. C. Bayne, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Bransten, Peter & Mimi Buckley, Susie Tompkins Buell, Henry Corning, Thomas R. Davis & Ellen Bush, Theodore L. Eliot, ExxonMobil Corporation, Mr. & Mrs. William S. Foss, Launce E. Gamble, Nancy Hult Ganis, Arthur & Susan Kern, Mr. & Mrs. Jack W. Ladd, Charles & Mimi Lowrey, Ewan & Suzanne Macdonald, Jeffery W. Meyer, Dr. Harold Nathan & Gail Seneca, The Nathan M. Ohrbach Foundation, Bernard A. Osher Foundation, Ann Stone, Jack & Jane Stupp, Mr. & Mrs. Stephen A. Thal.

In-Kind Donations

We are grateful to the following individuals for donations to prbo:

Judi & MacAdam Black for a computer, monitor & printer; Ms. Dorothy J. Boswell for a computer, monitor & printer; Donna Cook for a handmade cotton baby quilt; Rig Currie for donating his cottage in Inverness for a two-night stay for our silent auction; Bill Foss for hosting a day on the San Francisco Bay on his boat the *Détente* for our silent auction; Jack Ladd for donating his Bolinas home for a weekend for prbo's silent auction; Point Reyes Printing for insert envelopes for the *Observer*; Lang Stevenson for lunch for our Bird-A-Thon committee.

Wish List

Prbo is seeking donations of the following:

Equipment for our new facility at Dogtown, California! Laptop computer 400 mHz or faster ■ Photocopier ■ Furnishings for intern housing: stove, refrigerator & microwave oven. ■ *Equipment for PRBO projects:* Laptop computers 486 and Pentium or better ■ Pentium or better desktop computers with monitors ■ Macintosh G4 ■ Iomega Zip drives ■ High capacity network laser printer with multiple paper trays ■ Single wide trailer to serve as a remote field office ■ Spotting scopes with tripods ■ Binoculars, 8 or 10 power ■ Two-way radios & battery chargers ■ Cell phone time & phones ■ Wooden picnic table with benches ■ Conference table, 6 by 3-4 feet ■ Portable radio/cd player/tape player ■ Window air-conditioner ■ Carousel slide projector.

Please call Melissa Frakes: (415) 868-1221, ext. 11.

As always, PRBO is deeply grateful to Audubon Canyon Ranch, Point Reyes National Seashore, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for providing facilities and field stations where we work.

Institution Giving

Our many foundation and corporate supporters help prbo realize our mission of conservation through science. We are grateful to all! Grants received during the past several months include those listed below.

The Gabilan Foundation has generously provided funding for our San Francisco Bay Habitat Project. The goal of this project is to aid in the restoration and preservation of a healthy Bay ecosystem—to ensure the long-term abundance and diversity of birds and other wildlife. Gabilan Foundation support will help prbo broaden our research efforts on the Bay and adjacent lands—and fund a prbo Conservation Policy position—to help land managers prioritize acquisition and restoration efforts.

We thank the Bernard A. Osher Foundation for their ongoing support of prbo's Intern Program, which has trained more than 400 conservation biologist interns during the past 20 years. The program provides essential field experience for students training to become professional conservation biologists. While learning sound techniques for avian research, interns also provide high-quality, enthusiastic staffing for prbo's science-based conservation projects throughout the San Francisco area.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (nfwf) has again provided a matching grant to prbo in support of bird and habitat conservation planning. We are deeply appreciative of our partnership with nfwf.

We are also most appreciative of the generous gifts of the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund and the Tides Foundation for general support, as these grants allow prbo to apply the funds where most needed to achieve our "conservation through science" goals.

PRBO Field Biologists, February through May 2000

Sue Abbott, Keith Barnes, Daniel Barton, Johanne Berthiaume, Linsey Blake, Darlene Browning, Elizabeth Brusati, Dan Calvert, Scott Cashen, Roy Churchwell, David Cowell, Bobbie Davis, Caroline Fournier, Joanne Gilchrist, Stephanie Grossman, Jill Harley, Veera Harnal, Laird Henkel, Sherry Hudson, Thomas Krueger, David Lains, Gena Lasko, Tammy Lim, Cody Martz, Chris McCreedy, Sharon McDougal, Theresa McKenzie, Brennan Mulrooney, Kristie Nelson, Marcy Okada, Jon Phillipsborn, Mark Polluck, Devii Rao, Matt Ricketts, Chris Rintoul, Rachel Roberts, Benjamin Saenz, Madeline Schickel, Zach Smith, Valerie Steen, Shawn Stevens, Nik Tataric, Charmian Traynor, Crow White, Melissa Wipff.

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Bird-A-Thon 2000

Join us for a great day of birding that supports PRBO research, conservation and education.

Help surpass the 1999 record of \$100,000!

Your Bird-A-Thon brochure will be sent soon. Or, for more information, contact Matt Leffert at (415) 868-1221, extension 10.

PRBO MEMBERS' EVENTS

MONTHLY BIRD WALKS Usually held the first Sunday of each month in the Point Reyes National Seashore area. Meet at 9:00 AM. Walks last about 2 to 3 hours. \$5/person donation requested. For more information, call 415/868-0655.

July 2 ■ **Birds of Redwood Creek** • Riparian habitat near Muir Beach

August 6 ■ **Coastal Scrub & Riparian Canyons** • Near our Palomarin Station

September 9 ■ **Snowy Plovers** • Conservation of coastal habitats

DAY TRIPS WITH RICH STALLCUP Advance sign-up required. Limited group size. \$25/person for each trip. Participants are advised to bring a field lunch. To sign up, call Melissa Pitkin at (415) 868-1221, extension 33.

August 19 ■ **Abbotts Lagoon** • Shorebirds & waterbirds in migration at Point Reyes National Seashore

October 7 ■ **The Outer Point of Point Reyes** • In search of rare & regular avian migrants on the water & on land

PRBO online :: WEB SITE www.prbo.org :: E-MAIL prbo@prbo.org

Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO) works to conserve birds and the environment, using science to find solutions to problems threatening wildlife populations and ecosystems.

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Sponsor: \$500
Sustaining: \$250
Contributing: \$100

Family: \$50
Regular: \$35
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Please see page 11.