

## Birds at the Albany Shoreline ALBANY NECK AND BULB BIRD SURVEY



BY CITIZENS FOR EAST SHORE PARKS AND GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY

FUNDED BY A GRANT FROM THE CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS FOUNDATION CONDUCTED JULY 2015 – JUNE 2016

The Albany Neck and Bulb jut a mile out into San Francisco Bay from the City of Albany's spectacular waterfront park. Starting as a landfill in 1963, the Bulb became the first parcel marked for inclusion into a shoreline state park, ultimately McLaughlin Eastshore State Park. Now, the Bulb is designated as a conservation area because of its unique location and abundant vegetation, which provides habitat for a rich diversity of wildlife. The City of Albany and the East Bay Regional Park District are working together to complete the development of the Neck and Bulb as a magnificent park.

# SFS

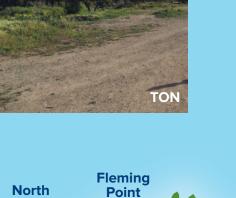




Great News! Burrowing Owl sighted on the Albany Plateau conservation area. This bird is threatened with extinction.







## Albany Neck and Bulb Bird Survey Map

South Facing Slope (SFS) of the Neck and Bulb – surveyed from the Shoreline Trail. Every survey started here because it heats up earlier in the morning, stimulating early bird activity. This area was not accessible July – November 2015 due to construction activity. Until the trail opened to the public, the birding teams surveyed the SFS area by looking south (down) from the top of the Neck and listening for bird calls.

Top of the Bulb (TOB) – surveyed from the circular trail at the top of the Bulb, plus its several side trails that lead to viewpoints of adjacent portions of the Bulb.

North Side of the Bulb (NSOB, not including TOB) – surveyed from the trail that heads north from the TOB down to the shoreline; then east (as far as feasibly possible) along the north shoreline of the Bulb.

Top of the Neck (TON) – surveyed by walking east from the east edge of the Bulb to the east end of the Neck. Surveyors identified a lone eucalyptus tree as the boundary line between the east end of the neck and the west end of Albany Plateau.

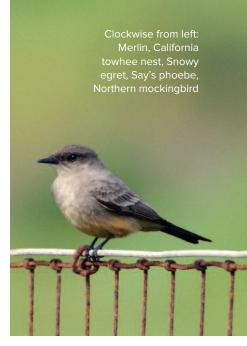












### **About the Bird Survey**

The bird survey was conducted two times each month from July 2015 to June 2016. The area studied consists of the entire Neck and Bulb, the airspace above, and the exposed mudflats adjacent to the Neck and Bulb.

Each survey began between sunrise and one hour after sunrise. Every bird team identified the number of land birds and the species by sight and sound in each survey area. Water birds and shore birds were not tallied unless observed on the immediate shoreline. The survey:

- Determined which bird species are present and how their abundance varies over a calendar year.
- Identified the habitats these birds use.
- Increased our understanding of what kinds of feasible habitat improvements would likely support greater diversity and abundance of native birds.

### **A Living Environment**

The Albany Bulb has specific attributes that differentiate it from other East Bay shoreline lands. A 33-acre area, it features varied topography, biodiverse ruderal vegetation, and a

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geographic location that provides natural beauty and wilderness adjacent to a dense urban area. As part of the Pacific Flyway, the Bulb serves as an important refuge for migrating, resident, and wintering birds. Both non-native and native vegetation play a role in furnishing habitat upon which the diverse bird communities depend. The Bulb exemplifies the resilience and power of nature as it has evolved from a landfill into today's vital habitat for an abundance of wildlife.

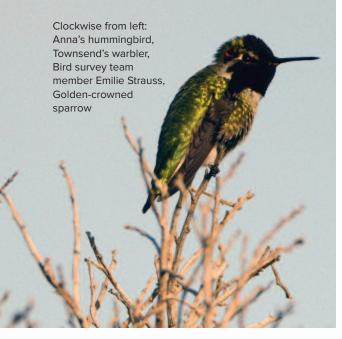
Designated in the Eastshore State Park General Plan as an upland and tideland conservation area, the Albany Bulb also contains wetland habitats and coastal salt marsh vegetation.

## A Variety of Uses Means a Variety of Birds

Approximately ninety bird species were observed at the Neck and Bulb over the 12-month survey period. Birds heavily use this area across the seasons for breeding, as a migration rest stop, for year-round residence, and for wintering. Birds depend on the Neck and

Bulb for rest, food, and shelter. Here are some examples:

- The House finch is a consistent Bulb resident. The partially coral-colored males and buffy females gather in large social and vocal flocks.
- The White-crowned sparrow is a regular wintering bird that depends on the Bulb for abundant food and shelter, such as seeds and Coyote bush.
- The Say's phoebe is a popular migrant that reliably visits the Neck.
- Townsend's warblers are winter visitors that depend on the Bulb as a welcome waypoint between their breeding site as far north as Alaska and their wintering grounds as far south as Panama.
- White-tailed kites depend on the Bulb as an ideal location where they can rest and survey their hunting and nesting territories.
- The Golden-crowned sparrow is a voracious berry gulper and spends winters at the Albany Bulb.









## Explore All Species Observed at the Neck and Bulb

A full list of the species observed, including the Northern Mockingbird, a polyglot that perfectly mimics sounds from motorbikes to ringtones, is online at www.eastshorepark.org. Images and additional details about the bird survey are also available.

Climate change threatens species including the Townsend's warbler, White-tailed kite, and Forster's tern among others found at the Bulb and Neck. Read more on the Audubon CA site at bit.ly/1Q6Lore.

### A Place for Discovery

The Albany Neck and Bulb bird survey documents the tremendous diversity of bird species in this relatively small area along the San Francisco Bay. As the Bulb transitions into the state park, it must remain a refuge that improves and supports this vast wildlife community. Goals:

 Invite park visitors to discover the remarkable resilience of the wild





community that thrives at the Bulb.

- Minimize construction to create low-impact paths and protect the undergrowth and grasses on which many ground-dwelling species depend.
- Ensure that important habitat is undisturbed and that the vegetative features that sustain the Bulb and Neck's biodiversity are enhanced.
- Cultivate and protect the outstanding attributes of the natural beauty of the wild Bulb and Neck biological community.

### **Special Thanks**

Contributors: Robert Cheasty, Shirley Dean, Patricia Jones, Peter Rauch, Cameron Wilson, Roberta Wyn, Pam Young.

Print and Design: Conifer Creative,



Autumn Press, Sally Douglas Arce. The Bird Survey Team operated under the guidance of Golden Gate Audubon Society East Bay Conservation Committee; from left to right: Steve Granholm, Ellen Barth, Pam Young, Erica Rutherford, John Colbert, and Emilie Strauss (top right photo).

Photographers: Pam Young, birds; Robert Lewis, birds; Gregory Pfau, nest; Cameron Wilson, team photo.

## Golden Gate Audubon Society www.goldengateaudubon.org

Golden Gate Audubon Society engages people to experience the wonder of birds, translate that wonder into action, and protect native bird populations and their habitats.

Citizens for East Shore Parks (CESP) www.eastshorepark.org

The mission of CESP is to create a necklace of shoreline parks from the Oakland Estuary to the Carquinez Strait.

Cover photos from top to bottom: California towhee, Red-tailed hawk, White-tailed kite, Osprey