

# 2024 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

Inside:  
Find the NEW  
Gateways Magazine





**SOMETIMES IT TAKES A STORM** to appreciate the brighter days on the other side. We've kicked off the past two years with storms that caused park staff to assess the damage to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA), and regroup on the other side. Spring always follows with a bursting array of wonderful wildflowers. But we know there's work to be done to ensure these critical ecosystems can last through the climate challenges to come.

Climate resilience is a key tenet of the Parks Conservancy's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, which we began implementing over the last year. You'll see updates on the plan throughout this Annual Report and Gateways Magazine, including items about social justice, partnerships that lead to positive outcomes for parks and people, and special initiatives that will make a lasting impact on the parks.

The plan is already in motion. At Muir Woods, you can spot new "woody debris" creating pools and pockets for endangered coho salmon to thrive. In San Mateo County, you'll find community groups making new connections with their national parks. On Alcatraz, you'll see visitors nodding as they make new connections between the island's history and today's issues.

Thank you for championing these parks, and being dedicated to ensuring more people can benefit from them. We know, with your help, those bright days lie ahead.



*Christine Lehnertz*  
**CHRISTINE LEHNERTZ**  
President & CEO



*Staci Slaughter*  
**STACI SLAUGHTER**  
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▲ **ABOVE:** It was a busy summer at the Crissy Field Center. Thanks to park champions like you, we supported nearly 100,000 people through programs, resources, and engagement in 2023. Find out more about our collective impact for parks and people on the next page.

◀ **ON THE COVER:** On a clear day you can see the Farallon Islands from Mt. Tamalpais, and people love the mountain for photography, yoga, or a variety of other activities.

◀ **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Sun peeks through at Muir Woods, where the Redwood Renewal project is helping improve habitat for endangered coho salmon and the health of the forest.





# OUR IMPACT FOR PARKS AND PEOPLE

THANKS TO YOUR SUPPORT, here's a sampling of all we accomplished together in 2023 across more than 82,000 acres, from San Mateo County to San Francisco and Marin:

## ▲ ACCESS TO PARKS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**CHINA BEACH:** With our partners at the National Park Service (NPS), we're helping improve access to a hidden gem of San Francisco. In 2023 we kicked off a project to rehabilitate this site and restore the bathhouse facility, including restrooms and visitor amenities.

**PRESIDIO TUNNEL TOPS:** We're delivering on the promise of this park site, hosting events like Access to Adventure Day and community groups including the Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation, Asian Americans for Civil Rights and Equality, Brown Girls Surf, and more.

## ▼ YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND CAREER PATHWAYS

**GROWING AT CRISSY FIELD CENTER:** In 2023, we expanded our popular Inspiring Young Emerging Leaders (I-YEL) program into Marin, strengthened partnerships with local middle schools, and brought back programs like Park Hop, which explores Black history and resilience in our parks.

**PAID INTERNSHIPS:** We continue to expand career pathways in the parks, offering a new paid internship opportunity for high school youth and continuing the successful Adventure Guide program at Presidio Tunnel Tops.



## ▲ SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

**INCLUSION IN PARKS:** In June, Partnership for the Presidio partners helped put on a Fantastic Field Day and a celebration of inclusive sports. The Parks Conservancy also launched the colorful "Parks For All" collection in our Park Stores.

**PLANNING FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE:** We've started working on a climate vulnerability assessment framework with our park partners, and in 2023 the partners of One Tam released the Marin Regional Forest Health Strategy to monitor and improve the health of Marin's forests.



## ► COMMUNITY SCIENCE AND STEWARDSHIP

**COMMUNITY SCIENCE BUZZING:** The public joined us to monitor pollinators at Tamalpais Bee Lab and Pollinator Week events. Volunteers with the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory spent more than 12,000 hours banding and counting raptors in the Marin Headlands.



## BY THE NUMBERS

7,087

Volunteers who logged more than 80,000 hours in our parks in 2023. That's almost \$3M in value to the GGNRA!

2,413

People reached through community engagement efforts at Rancho Corral de Tierra. We helped community groups like Puente de la Costa Sur and CoastPride connect to the park.

93,200

Presidio Tunnel Tops visitors who got to meet our Adventure Guides. This key pathway to employment helps young people welcome visitors with relevant, inclusive activities.

## EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

**RECOGNIZING IMPACT:** Our Nicki Phelps was honored with the prestigious James V. Murfin Award for lasting contributions to the national park system, while Yakuta Poonawalla on our Community Stewardship and Engagement team was named one of Bay Nature Institute's Local Heroes.

**REIMAGINING THE CITY:** Along with our park partners, San Francisco city agencies, the California Academy of Sciences, and many more, we announced the exciting new "Reimagining San Francisco" initiative to build a city where people and nature thrive together.

## ▼ SPECIAL INITIATIVES

**ALCATRAZ ISLAND:** In October 2023 we celebrated 50 years of Alcatraz as a national park site. New programs and efforts like the Formerly Incarcerated Speaker Series are helping turn the island into a platform to examine incarceration in the U.S. today.





# PEOPLE AND PARKS FOREVER Fund™

The People and Parks Forever Fund, established in 2020, will deliver the multi-faceted benefits of the GGNRA to our entire Bay Area community. We acknowledge parks have often not been welcoming to or inclusive of Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Our goal is for everyone to feel welcomed and have a sense of belonging in the parks. The People and Parks Forever Fund supports park programs centered on park pathways for youth, engagement in community science and stewardship, designing for climate resilience, and increased access to the parks for all. These efforts are grounded in racial and social justice principles and co-designed with communities.

The Parks Conservancy gratefully acknowledges these generous individuals and foundations who have made gifts or pledges to the People and Parks Forever Fund.



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A special thank-you from the Board of Trustees of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy for your dedication to parks.

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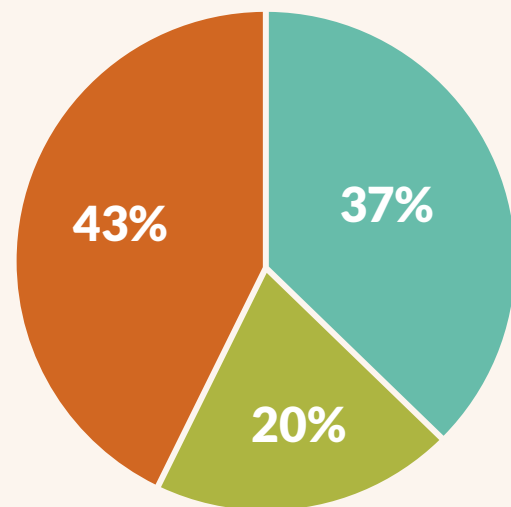


## SAVE THE DATE: TRAILS FOREVER DINNER ON ALCATRAZ

For the first time ever, we'll be hosting our Trails Forever Dinner on Alcatraz Island! Join us for a once-in-a-lifetime evening to benefit parks on Saturday, Oct. 19, 2024. Check [parksconservancy.org/trailsforever](https://parksconservancy.org/trailsforever) or email Director of Special Events Dennise Abad at [dabad@parksconservancy.org](mailto:dabad@parksconservancy.org) for more information.



## FINANCIALS



Total support 2023  
**\$39,013,736**

Total support to the parks 1982-2023  
**\$784 million**

Park Interpretation  
& Visitor Services

**\$14,598,941**  
(37%)

Youth & Community  
Programs

**\$7,755,901**  
(20%)

Park Enhancements,  
Restoration, & Stewardship

**\$16,658,894**  
(43%)

Download full financial statements online at [annualreport.parksconservancy.org](https://annualreport.parksconservancy.org)



## PACIFIC OCEAN



## FIND YOUR PARK

Stretching across more than 82,000 acres, the Golden Gate national parks include the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Muir Woods National Monument, and Fort Point National Historic Site. They were among the most-visited national park units in the country in 2023.





**GOLDEN GATE  
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The National Park Service (NPS) is a federal agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior charged with managing the preservation and public use of America's most significant natural, scenic, historic, and cultural treasures. Established in 1916, the NPS manages 424 sites across the United States, including the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. For more information, call (415) 561-4700 or visit [nps.gov/goga](https://nps.gov/goga).

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In partnership with the National Park Service and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, and at no cost to taxpayers, the Presidio Trust brings alive the unique historic, natural, and recreational assets of the Presidio for the inspiration, education, health, and enjoyment of all people. For more information, call (415) 561-5300 or visit [presidio.gov](https://presidio.gov).

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Incorporated in 1928 as a special district of the State of California to design, construct, finance, and operate the Golden Gate Bridge, the District today continues to provide safe and reliable operation, maintenance, and enhancement of the Bridge and to provide transportation services, as resources allow, for customers within the U.S. Highway 101 Golden Gate Corridor.

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In 2014, four public land agencies (the National Park Service, California State Parks, Marin County Parks, and Marin Water) partnered with the Parks Conservancy to form One Tam, which brings together their resources, talents, and philanthropic efforts to support the stewardship, conservation, and enjoyment of Mt. Tamalpais.

Community scientists unite | Roving Ranger on tour | Stargazing spots

# GATEWAYS



**SPRING-SUMMER 2024 | Vol. 30, No. 1**

The Magazine of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy and the GGNRA





Ryan Curran White

Kirby Cove in the Marin Headlands exemplifies how easy it can be to get to a national park space right next to the city. Get more ideas for excursions at [parksconservancy.org/findyourpark](https://parksconservancy.org/findyourpark)

Follow us on Instagram for more updates!

 @ParksConservancy





How wide are your wings? These tape measurements help Hawk Hill visitors envision the wingspan of various raptors. This year, our Golden Gate Raptor Observatory is celebrating 40 years of tracking raptors. Find fascinating raptor info at [parksconservancy.org/ggro](https://parksconservancy.org/ggro)





**WELCOME TO THE NEW GATEWAYS MAGAZINE!** We're proud to present this new format for our longstanding member publication, now featuring more space for photos, in-depth storytelling, and information from across the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA).

Here at the Parks Conservancy, we're committed to connecting people to parks, and one of the many ways we do that is through storytelling. That means unearthing history that may have been previously passed over, so that's why you'll see our new "Untold History" feature in this issue. We're also committed to hearing from the many people who enjoy the parks in a variety of ways. We loved meeting birder Daniela Sánchez and Ranger Jace Ritchey, and hope you will too.

You make it possible for us to welcome people to these beloved natural areas at the Golden Gate. Thank you for being a member and enjoy Gateways Magazine!



**Christine Lehnertz**  
President & CEO  
Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

Emily Harwitz

Illustration: Roxanne Meneses; Image: Courtesy of Tosha Stimage

# MILE MARKERS

YOUR IMPACT, AT A GLANCE

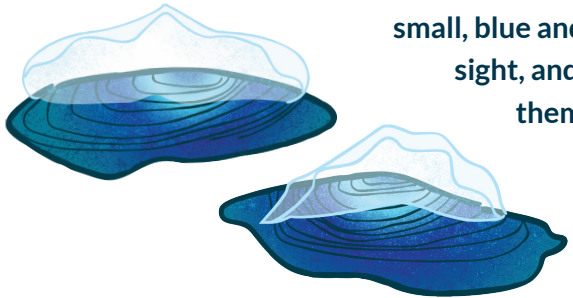
**1,500**  
**PARK LOVERS**

who brought their friends and family out for a sunny day in the Presidio at the first-ever Parks4All: Brewfest last year. Don't miss out this year! All proceeds benefit the parks.



Join us July 27. Get tickets at [parksconservancy.org/brewfest24\\_gm](https://parksconservancy.org/brewfest24_gm)

## Thousands and thousands of "by-the-wind-sailors"



that washed up on GGNRA beaches this spring. The small, blue and clear *Velella velella* were a spectacular sight, and our social media followers got to see them first. Make sure you're getting the latest from the parks by following us [@ParksConservancy](https://www.instagram.com/ParksConservancy) on Instagram.

## THEY SAID IT

"Nature provides an accessible and inclusive entryway for dialogue and consideration of complex social and environmental topics."

—Tosha Stimage, the third artist selected to create large-scale public artwork at Presidio Tunnel Tops as part of the "Ancestral Futurism" mentorship. Make sure to find Tosha's artwork at Presidio Tunnel Tops this summer.



## ON THE COVER

We had fun counting fungi at a recent BioBlitz. Anybody can be a community scientist! See why we're watching wildlife later in this issue and check [parksconservancy.org/events](https://parksconservancy.org/events) for upcoming opportunities.

Photo by Kelly Sullivan

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NEW AT FORT POINT, MT. TAM, AND BEYOND

- › Have you visited the new Fort Point exhibit yet? After 12 years in development, the recently opened exhibit showcases the fort’s rich heritage and captivating stories through artifacts and interactive displays.
- › This spring, for the first time, people are able to watch Peregrine Falcons grow up on Alcatraz! Our livestream gives a look into female falcon Lawrencium and her mate raising their fledgling family. See them grow at [parksconservancy.org/falconcam\\_spring24](https://parksconservancy.org/falconcam_spring24)
- › The Parks Conservancy, working with the NPS, California State Parks and Marin Water as part of the One Tam partnership, was recently awarded a \$4.26M grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board to support forest conservation programs. This grant will help support healthier forests in Marin County.



UNTOLD HISTORY

HEY, NEIGHBOR: CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ANGEL ISLAND, ALCATRAZ

**DID YOU KNOW** Angel Island was almost part of the GGNRA? In a 1972 study establishing the park’s boundaries, Alcatraz made it while Gov. Jerry Brown requested Angel Island remain a state park. Here’s more intersecting history of the two islands:



- › The Coast Miwok camped seasonally at what is now Angel Island. According to the NPS, after the arrival of Spanish colonizers, some Indigenous people stayed on Alcatraz to escape the Mission system.
- › When the military fort at Alcatraz was constructed in 1854, most of the sandstone came from a quarry on the east side of Angel Island.
- › In 1861, the soil for the first gardens on Alcatraz came from Angel Island. The soil was originally brought over to hold cannons in place, but military families living on the island grabbed some for use in their own garden plots.
- › In the 1910s, the U.S. Immigration Station on Angel Island was almost moved to Alcatraz. The Angel Island station would process 175,000 Chinese immigrants over 30 years, many of whom were detained and brutally interrogated there.

Alcatraz City Cruises is bringing back its Angel Island-Alcatraz Combo Tour, where you can visit both islands in one day, including the award-winning Cellhouse Audio Tour for more Alcatraz history. Visit [alcatrazcruises.com](https://alcatrazcruises.com) for details.

Ryan Curran White; Bancroft Library

Carina Mask



TURNING TO THE TREES WITH RANGER JACE

**JACE RITCHEY** never dreamed of becoming a park ranger. In 2020, wildfires blazed through their community in the Santa Cruz Mountains. To heal, they "turned to the trees." Now, you'll find Ranger Jace greeting visitors and starring in social media posts from Muir Woods National Monument.

How did you get to your position at Muir Woods?

When I committed to a career shift towards ecosystem stewardship, interpreting the redwoods of Muir Woods was the goal—but the park wasn't hiring. I applied to over 80 NPS units but only heard back from two. After years as a seasonal at Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, Point Reyes, and Yosemite, the stars aligned for me to join the team here.

What does a Muir Woods ranger/interpreter do?

It takes a team to run this site! We open and close the park, swear-in junior rangers, check-in service animals, cover up social trails (unauthorized paths off established trails), train staff & volunteers, develop interpretive signage, greet dignitaries, plan events, build relationships in the community...the list goes on!

Muir Woods has seen lots of construction lately. What is the Redwood Renewal project?

This project is a response to decades of management that created imbalances within this ecosystem. Now, our vegetation crews are returning more than 3,000 plants to the ecosystem. Over time, the natural movement of water will continue transforming Redwood Creek to a more complex, natural, and healthy stream.

How will the project impact endangered coho salmon populations?

Newly installed logs provide features for water to flow around and through. This will naturally increase critical fingerling habitat, a big win for the lil' fish. Park guests may see spawning coho after the first winter rains, and their young swimming in ripples year-round.



# WHY WE'RE WATCHING WILDLIFE:

# MORE THAN JUST CUTE ANIMAL PICS



By Emily Harwitz

**ON** an early morning in February, a fresh cohort of volunteers for One Tam's Marin Wildlife Watch community science program sat around a table in a darkened room, ready to see some animals. In the front of the room, an image flashed onto the screen. Two white orbs bordered by black stripes peered out into the night from between a pair of triangular ears. "A badger!" someone exclaimed. The next image was in color, a foggy day on Mt. Tamalpais as a magnificent Red-tailed Hawk spread its wings mid-flight, clutching hay in one foot.



"Who the heck knows how squirrels are doing? No one's out there being like, are the squirrels in our town okay? Are the raccoons where they should be?"

-Lisette Arellano, Senior Program Manager, Conservation and Community Science

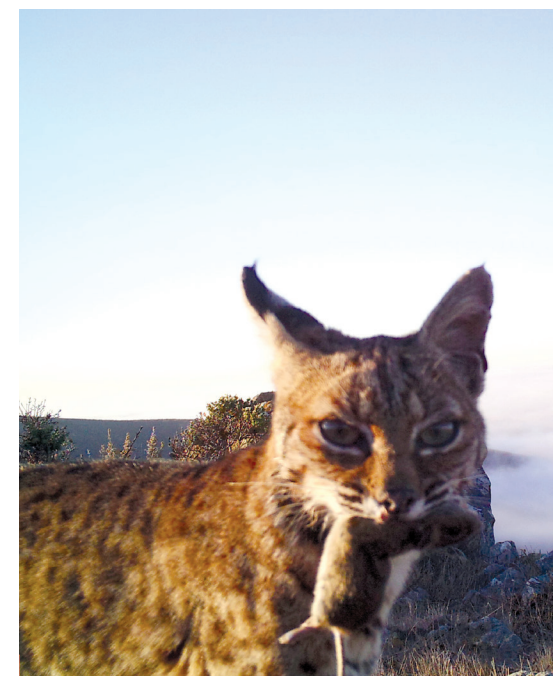
These images are just two of millions from the many motion-activated cameras across Mt. Tam, helping us learn about the wildlife with which we share this landscape. Since its inception in 2014, Marin Wildlife Watch volunteers have helped process images from the cameras into data. This

data helps One Tam's scientists understand how the region's mammal community is changing over time and how to better protect Marin's public wildlands in the future.

"Who the heck knows how squirrels are doing?" says Lisette Arellano. Arellano is the Parks Conservancy's Senior Program Manager in Conservation and Community Science, working primarily with One Tam's programs like Marin Wildlife Watch. "No one's out there being like, are the squirrels in our town okay? Are the raccoons where they should be?"

That's where the wildlife cameras come in. Currently, 110 cameras installed all over Mt. Tam are active 24/7, snapping a picture whenever they detect motion. The cameras are mostly off-trail, so shouldn't capture human movements.

Checking wildlife cameras at a volunteer event (left) and in the field (below). The cameras have collected more than 10 million photos since 2014.



Animals seen on camera include: (Previous page, l-r) Red-tailed Hawk, American badger; (This page, clockwise from top left) Bobcat, coyote, spotted skunk.



potential to help a lot of other parts of the world that may be less resourced," Arellano says.

To Arellano, Marin Wildlife Watch offers a way for community members to get closer to nature. As a naturalist, she often coaches people on how to connect with nature through their five senses. Remote sensing technology allows us to extend those senses, like sight, to places we don't normally go.

The program also helps the community get closer to each other. Ann Maddox started volunteering with Marin Wildlife Watch six years ago after moving to the Bay Area and seeing an ad in the Marin Independent Journal. Over the years, Maddox has gained fellow nature-loving friends and a deeper knowledge and connection to Mt. Tam.

"Even though Mt. Tam may be only one tiny part of our environment, it's one part of a big effort to try to save our planet and the species in it," Maddox says.

Marin Wildlife Watch is helping tell Mt. Tam's story through data for generations to come, Arellano says. But there's still the simple pleasure of seeing pictures of animals doing funny things. "This project allows us to relish in that joy of connecting with the animals on their terms," Arellano says, "while also contributing to this huge data project that's going to be its own legacy."

But that means retrieving the photos requires intense manual labor. Four times a year, staff have a two-week window to go out and check every camera, download the photos, and make sure the gear is still working. Nature can be unpredictable—a tree could topple, shrubbery could spring up—so team members are ready to improvise.

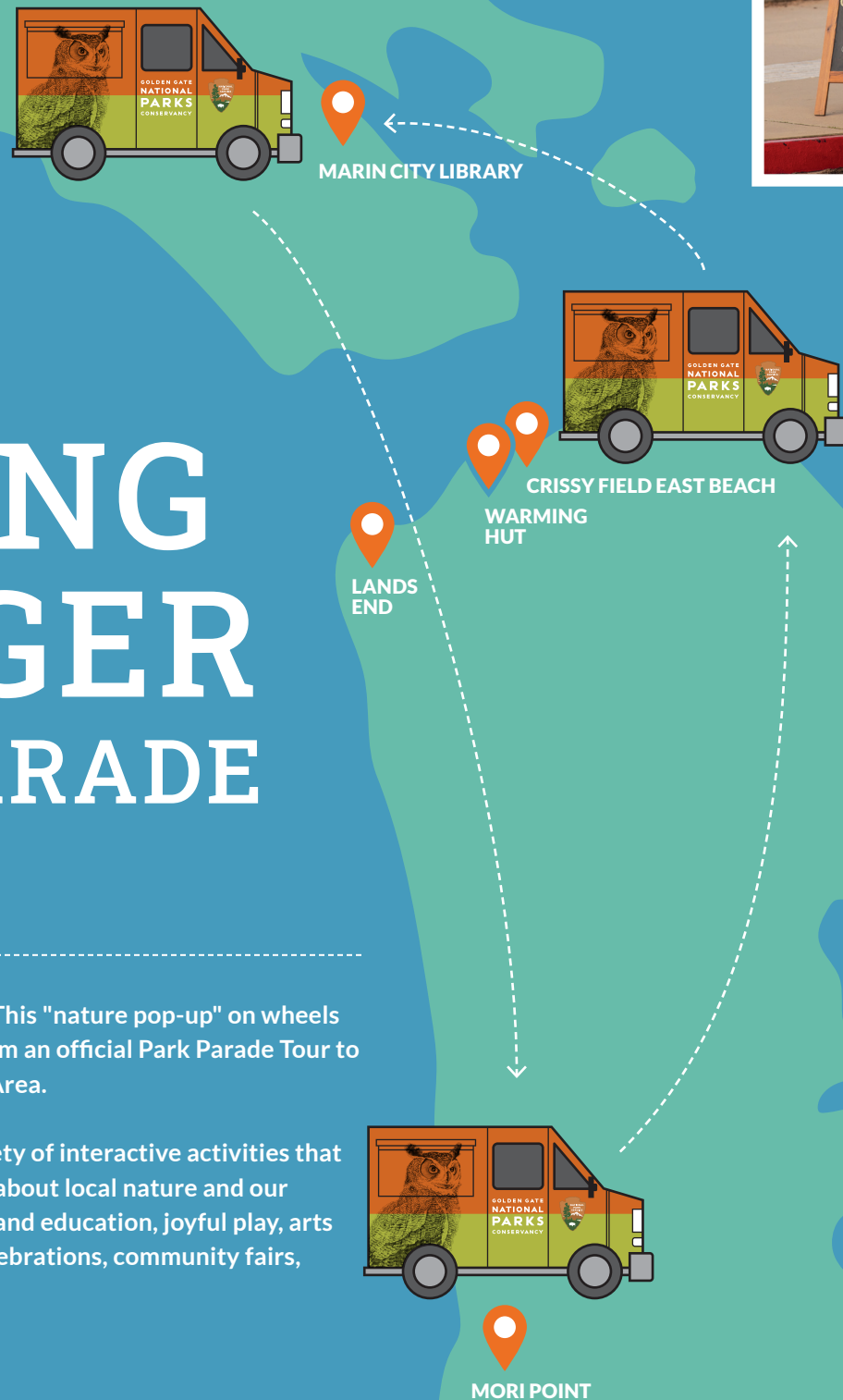
Staff upload photos to the Wildlife Insights online platform, which uses computer vision, a form of AI, to help analyze and sort photos along with environmental data from the cameras. Wildlife Insights is now used around the world to help people monitor wildlife biodiversity, and it was made possible in part by Marin Wildlife Watch. Much of the data set used to train the computer vision came from Mt. Tam images reviewed by One Tam staff and volunteers. "In that way, we all contributed to this technology that has the



# THE ROVING RANGER PARK PARADE TOUR

Have you met our Roving Ranger? This "nature pop-up" on wheels has been getting out and about, from an official Park Parade Tour to community events across the Bay Area.

The Roving Ranger has a wide variety of interactive activities that inspire awe, wonder, and curiosity about local nature and our parks. We bring access to learning and education, joyful play, arts and crafts, and more to cultural celebrations, community fairs, and beyond.



## OUR OFFERINGS

Here are examples of what we can do, working with park staff or co-designing with community partners:

- **Blooming beauties:** Find out about the Bay Area's wonderful wildflowers.
- **Naturalist programs:** From plant talks to pollinator basics and iNaturalist 101, these programs get you closer to your local natural habitats and promise to engage your senses.
- **Raptors and migration:** Learn fascinating basics about raptors, their migration patterns, or go on a staff-led walk to find one!
- **Storytime with local libraries:** Join park and library staff for book readings or other events.
- **Nature play:** Make wildlife clay molds, practice nature journaling, paper flower making, and more.
- **Cultural celebrations & observances:** Join us for Pride in the Parks, Día de los Niños, Día de los Muertos, Ramadan events, and more.

We welcome collaborations and are excited to bring out the Roving Ranger to a community event or park near you. If interested, please email [rovingranger@parksconservancy.org](mailto:rovingranger@parksconservancy.org). ¡Hablamos español!



Illustration: Roxanne Meneses; owl illustration: Ryan Jones

Ryan Curran White; Yakuta Poonawalla



# TURNING SPRING DAYS OF SERVICE INTO SUMMER FUN

**A BIG THANKS** to more than 500 volunteers who came out to steward the parks for Earth Day, National Park Week, and National Volunteer Week this April! During our Spring Days of Service events, you helped restore native plant communities at Rancho Corral de Tierra, protect Presidio habitats, and more.

Throughout April, many volunteers became community scientists by observing and identifying organisms throughout the park during the City Nature Challenge. And the One Tam team welcomed volunteers throughout April to assist with surveying and monitoring local wild bees at the Tamalpais Bee Lab.

You can bring that Earth Day and community science spirit to the parks this summer by joining one of our regular volunteer programs. We've got opportunities across the parks, in San Mateo, San Francisco, and Marin counties. Check the latest at [parksconservancy.org/volunteer](https://parksconservancy.org/volunteer)



Lizzy Myers

Michael Chasse / NPS Natural Resources

## COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

PROGRAM	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
NATIVE PLANT NURSERIES							
Marin Headlands Nursery			1PM-4PM 3RD WED			9:30AM-12PM Check dates	
Presidio Nursery						10AM-1PM Check dates	
HABITAT RESTORATION							
Marin Habitat Restoration Team (includes Tennessee Valley Tuesdays and Invasive Plant Patrol)		10 AM-2 PM (1ST, 3RD, 5TH TUES)	10AM-2:30PM				9:30 AM-2:30 PM
Presidio Habitat Stewards			9AM-12PM 1ST, 3RD WED			9AM-12PM	
Rancho Corral de Tierra Habitat Stewards							9:30AM-12:30PM 3RD SUN
San Francisco Habitat Stewards			9AM-12PM	1 PM-4 PM			
HISTORIC GARDENS AND LANDSCAPE PROGRAMS							
Alcatraz Historic Gardens			8AM-12PM	8AM-12PM			
Black Point Historic Gardens				2 PM-5PM	9 AM-12PM	10AM-1PM 1ST SAT	
Golden Gate Maintenance				9 AM-12PM			
Presidio Forest Stewards			9AM-12PM 2ND, 4TH WED		9AM-12PM		
BEACH CLEAN-UPS							
Muir Beach Clean-ups						10AM-1PM 1ST SAT	
Ocean Beach Clean-ups				9:30AM-12:30PM 2ND THU			

Registration required for all programs. Explore all our offerings at [parksconservancy.org/volunteer](https://parksconservancy.org/volunteer)  
For more information call (415) 561-3044 or email [volunteer@parksconservancy.org](mailto:volunteer@parksconservancy.org)





# SLOW BIRDING IN A FAST WORLD

BY EMILY HARWITZ



## ORNITHOLOGIST AND BIRDER DANIELA SÁNCHEZ

stops excitedly in her tracks to observe a Chesnut-backed Chickadee perch on a swaying eucalyptus branch, call its distinctive chick-a-dee song, and flit away. “It’s a nice clear day with little wind, which helps,” she says. “The birds are much more active when there isn’t a lot of wind.” Moments before, she’d watched a Red-tailed Hawk disappear into distant trees. She adds: “Except for the raptors. Raptors love wind.”

Sánchez, who is pursuing a Master’s in Ecology, Evolution, and Conservation Biology at San Francisco State University, is a Golden Gate Bird Alliance (GGBA) member. Today, we’re here to bird on one of the many trails of Rancho Corral de Tierra. Located about 20 miles down the coast from San Francisco, Rancho is a birder’s delight. It includes nearly 4,000 acres of diverse habitat, from open coastal scrub and grasslands to riparian woodlands, freshwater wetlands, eucalyptus forests, and manzanita chaparral.

Many people flock to birding because they love birds’ beautiful plumage, their intricate songs, or their entertaining antics. For Sánchez, it was serendipity. During her bachelor’s degree in biology, she needed one more class to graduate

and the only one available was ornithology. “Before that, I wasn’t really into birds,” Sánchez reflects. But she needed to graduate, so she enrolled. Learning about bird biology and how to interpret their behavior allowed Sánchez to start seeing birds as unique individuals with rich lives and personalities. “The lab portion of this class was basically field trips to go birding,” she says, “and I fell in love with it.”

She also fell in love with the inclusive birding community through groups like GGBA and Feminist Bird Club. “As nice as it is to go out on your own birding, sometimes you’d like some company,” she says. “And sometimes you’d like to share with someone who gets it, how cool it is that you saw X bird around.”

Sánchez describes the birding at Rancho as low-key, perfect for slower birding. A bench along one of Rancho’s trails offers a vista across grassland and coastal scrub to the



Emily Harwitz



Emily Harwitz

glittering Pacific Ocean. It’s a great place to slow down and birdwatch. Or bird-listen. “That’s a Bewick’s wren,” Sánchez says, after hearing the call and confirming it with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology birding app Merlin Bird ID.

Continuing on the trail, the landscape soon transitions into a covered woodland. A tap-tap-tapping alerts Sánchez to the Northern Flicker hammering and creeping up a nearby tree, its red cap a splash of brilliant color against the umber bark.

For Sánchez, birding is a way to relax and escape the hustle and stress of daily life. Slowing down to notice birds and getting to know them gives her a new lens through which to see the world. “I’m much more aware of what’s around me, which makes me more appreciative,” she says.

When the woods open back up to the rolling grassland, Montara Mountain to the right and the coastline in front, the view is breathtaking. It is much to appreciate indeed.



**DENNIS MABASA** is the dynamic new Vice President of Community and Youth Programs for the Parks Conservancy. They join us from the Friends of the Los Angeles River, where they most recently served as Chief Operating Officer. We chatted with Dennis about their connection to the outdoors and the importance of community.

How have green spaces been important in your life?

My parents didn't have a particular affinity for nature, but spending time picnicking or playing outside at local or regional parks was always a low-cost and accessible option for family time. I remember spending time outside with my brothers, being inspired to learn, and, most of all, being happy.

You immigrated from the Philippines as a child. Did that change how you interacted with the world around you?

As a bi-racial immigrant, I had the privilege of experiencing life through various cultural lenses. As a kid, it was energizing and exciting to learn about and experience different cultures and lived experiences. At an early age I learned that, though families may come from different sides of the world, many of us share the same needs.

What does it mean to you to work in support of a national park?

Within my role, I have a unique opportunity to work with a team of people and partners to build strong relationships with communities that have been historically and systemically excluded from the healing benefits of nature. This includes

people like myself: queer people, immigrants, people of color, and folks that haven't had the opportunities to experience nature and our national parks for various reasons.



What do you think our work in the parks can accomplish?

I came to care about nature because of the positive experiences I had outside in my childhood. Often, we need to be shown these green spaces by family, by teachers, or by mentors. What an honor and privilege it is to build systems that connect people to a world that can bring so much joy, community, and healing.

Who were important mentors in your life?

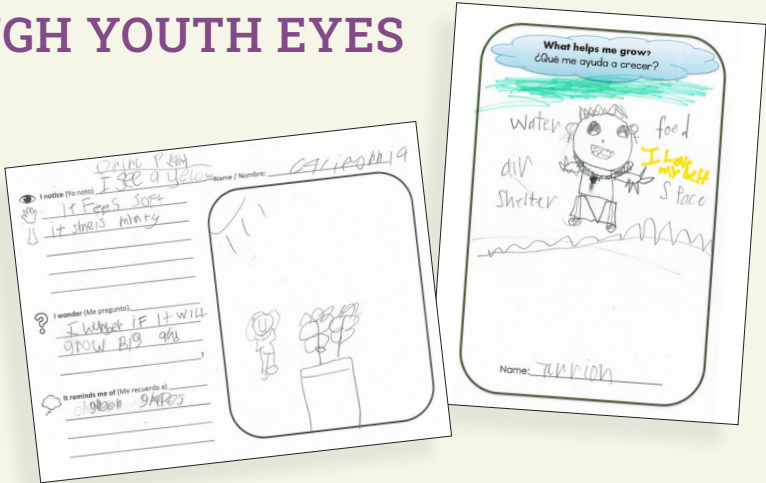
My first mentors were my family, specifically my parents, titos/titas, cousins, and my two older brothers. They taught me the value of community, education, and the value of supporting each other.

YOUTH CORNER

EXAMINING NATURE, THROUGH YOUTH EYES

**PLANTS AT OUR PRESIDIO NURSERY** are "green and smooth," they "feel soft and smell minty," and sometimes the "roots are small because it's in a tiny cup." It can be grounding to see nature through the eyes of students!

This spring, nursery and Crissy Field Center staff hosted elementary school students from Manzanita Community School in Oakland and other spots for the "Seeds to Flowers" program. Students explored the plant life cycle by peeking at seeds through microscopes, stepping into the misthouse, and studying plants through scientific sketching. Youth draw parallels between how plants and people grow. The program concludes with playtime at the Outpost at Presidio Tunnel Tops or Rodeo Beach, where students can explore their own connections to nature.



We're gearing up for a full summer of youth programming at the Crissy Field Center. See the latest work from students at [parksconservancy.org/youthcorner](https://parksconservancy.org/youthcorner).

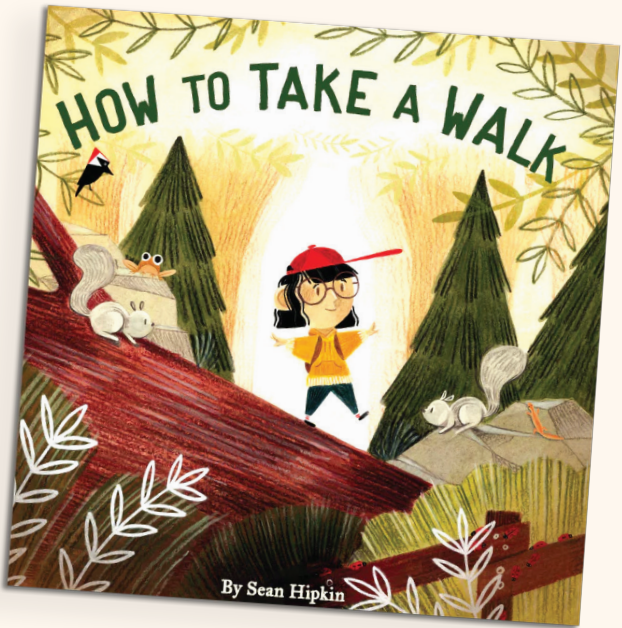
Ryan Curran White

DISCOVER 'HOW TO TAKE A WALK'

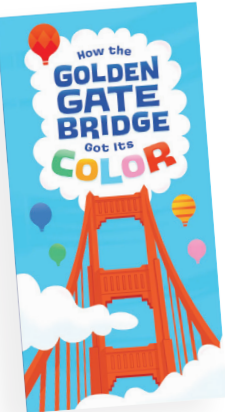
**LET'S HAVE AN ADVENTURE!** Help your favorite little explorer discover the wonders of nature with this adorable kids book by San Francisco illustrator Sean Hipkin. Follow along to find fun ideas on how to take a walk. Enjoy lots of little critters and plenty of nature to explore. This hardcover picture book is beautifully illustrated, with thick art paper and an attractive dust jacket, and will be an enduring and delightful gift for kids for years to come.

A Parks Conservancy original.

Member Price \$12.71



IMAGINE THAT!



**NEXT TIME YOU TAKE A WALK** across the Golden Gate Bridge, picture this: the bridge is painted red and white stripes, like a candy cane. Then, think again! Now it changes, and it's all black and yellow, like a bumble bee! Believe it or not, some people really wanted the bridge to be these unusual colors. Learn more about the unexpected—and unforgettable—true story of how San Francisco's famous span got its amazing color in our new kids book, "How the Golden Gate Bridge Got Its Color." As a special bonus, try out your own colors for the bridge with this fun coloring page!

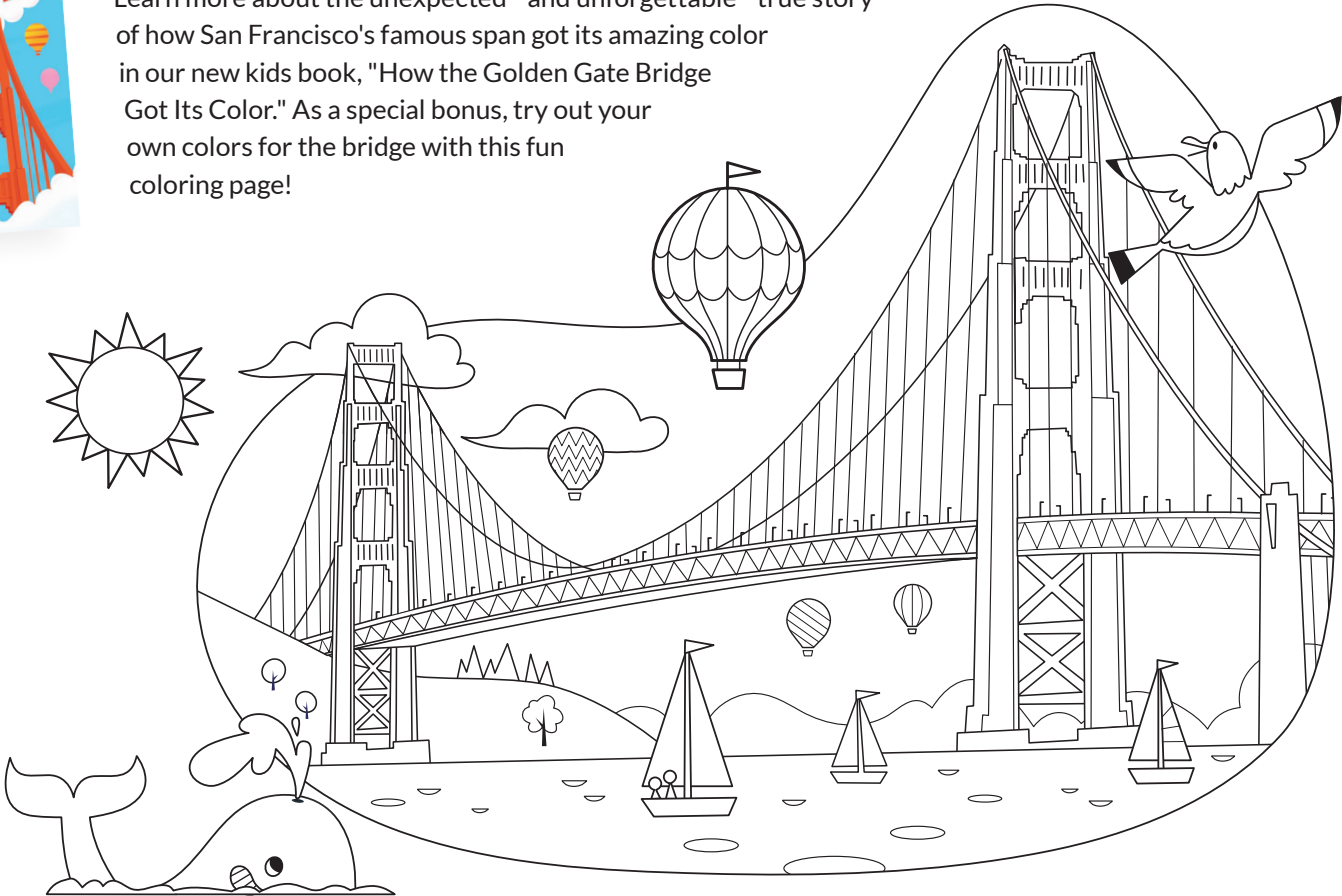


Illustration: Charles House



# JUST LOOK UP: STARGAZING IN THE GGNRA

By Ariel Robbins

**WHEN THE SUN SETS**, the skies above our parks illuminate with an ever-changing tapestry of planets, stars, constellations, and galaxies—many visible to the naked eye. If you know where to look, the GGNRA offers stargazers an endless well of magic to observe year-round.

The best way to start stargazing is to simply "look up!" according to Dan Smiley of the San Francisco Amateur Astronomers (SFAA). There’s no wrong way to observe the wonders of our known universe, but the farther you can get from city lights, the more stars you’ll see. Here are expert picks for parks with bright, expansive views of the night sky:

✦ **Tennessee Valley Trailhead**

A winding road takes you from the glow of the urban environment to a more remote parking lot. This spot is ideal for stargazing because of its expansive sky views, plus there’s no hike necessary! Just park and gaze up at the universe above you.

✦ **Bolinas Ridge**

Far from civilization and high above the sea, Bolinas Ridge offers open and sweeping views of the night sky—many of which are accessible right off Sir Francis Drake Blvd. and Highway 1.

✦ **Rancho Corral de Tierra**


The amount of open sky at Rancho Corral de Tierra is second-to-none. Park at the Montara State Beach Parking Lot and take a short walk on the Farallon Trail to watch the night sky unfold.

✦ **Ocean Beach**

Some stargazing spots are nestled right within city limits: Ocean Beach offers uninterrupted night sky views with the sound of crashing waves in the background.

✦ **The Presidio**


The Presidio is an incredible stargazing spot once the sun goes down. SFAA hosts frequent stargazing events at the Presidio, allowing participants to peek through a high-level telescope and learn more about our night skies from skilled volunteers. It's a great way to immerse yourself in community with fellow stargazers.



In the late spring and summer months, stargazers can keep their eyes out for these constellations, asterisms, and stars:

- Leo (connected to the Sickle)
- The Big Dipper
- Polaris
- Arcturus, the fourth largest star in our solar system with a yellow-ish hue





## Do your part

Light pollution is a problem for stargazers and our environment. Here are a few things you can do to minimize light pollution in your own home:

- Put your lights on a timer or motion sensor.
- Use warm-hue bulbs.
- Turn off lights when they’re not in use.
- Use thick curtains when using lights at night indoors.

Paul Myers

Alison Taggart-Barone

## Stargazing tips:

- Check for park and parking lot closures at [parksconservancy.org/closures](https://parksconservancy.org/closures)
- Bring a friend (or two!) with you to enjoy the views.
- You don't need a telescope; binoculars can be a great tool for stargazing!
- Check the weather, particularly the marine layer, before leaving.
- Mind your step on dark trails.
- Bring a red-light headlamp: It won’t impair your night vision but will allow you to see where you’re headed.







# GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION: TRACKING ROYAL TIDES IN THE PARKS

By Beatrice Kilat

There's no place like the California coast, and the GGNRA is home to 91 miles of precious shoreline. But the water has a message for us. This winter, as storms raged, flooding paths and ripping apart beach walkways, the message was clear: Watch out!

The highest tides of the year are royal tides, also known as king tides. These naturally occurring events happen a few times per year when the gravitational pull of the aligned sun, moon, and Earth are strongest.

While this phenomenon is normal, when these high tides occur during times of excessive rain or flooding, like the record-breaking rain of early 2023 and the squalls in winter 2024, there's an increased chance for damage.

When royal tides arrive, we see current flood risks and get a better idea of future sea level rise, a symptom of the

climate crisis. According to the 2018 update to the State of California Sea-Level Rise Guidance, San Francisco is projected to see sea level rise between 1.1-2.7 feet by 2050. By 2100, rising water levels could reach between 3.4-6.9 feet.

In the shadow of Mt. Tamalpais, the Bay Trail winds its way through Bothin Marsh, a 106-acre preserve through which Coyote Creek drains into Richardson Bay. The tidal wetlands, slough and marsh support native and rare plants, and provide habitat for hundreds of native birds and wildlife, including the endangered salt marsh harvest mouse.

At any given time on the multi-use trail, you can spot birders tracking migration overhead on the Pacific Flyway, cyclists spinning through their commutes, or people out walking. It's a recreation area and an entire ecosystem,

and it's completely underwater during these high tides.

When the tides rise at Stinson Beach, Easkoot Creek overflows, creeping through the paved beach parking lots and limiting access to the popular site. This creek ecosystem supports remnant populations of the threatened Central California Coast steelhead trout and other wildlife.

What are we to do when these beloved areas are at risk?

The simple answer is that we pay attention, learn, and adapt. Planned improvements for the paved lots at Stinson incorporate the natural features of the site, including the creek and dunes. Instead of interventions like seawalls, which can have adverse effects to delicate beaches, dune systems are being investigated for their ability to provide a "nature-based" protection system, minimizing beach erosion while protecting the shoreline. At Bothin, we're refining restoration and trail designs for the pathway as part of the Evolving Shorelines project.

You can join in by supporting the restoration of these vital habitats and ecosystems. Become a volunteer steward with the Parks Conservancy, or join a statewide community science effort by safely documenting the royal tides in coastal and shoreline areas as part of the California King Tides Project.



Great Blue Heron



Stinson Beach. Other images from Bothin Marsh

Kelly Sullivan

Isaac Pearlman



GARDENING FOR GOOD

**JEAN COLVIN AND BHARAT RAWAL**, San Francisco residents and members of the Parks Conservancy for more than 15 years, have long valued the parklands as a welcome respite.

Jean started volunteering with the Presidio Habitat Stewards in 2006. It was the perfect intersection of her interest in plants, the accessible outdoor Presidio setting, and the flexibility of engagement. Bharat soon opted to volunteer too, and he began his service at the Presidio Native Plant Nursery. He then migrated to the Alcatraz Historic Gardens, where he supports the composting program adjacent to the rose garden.

Jean says the couple have respect for everybody who "works so hard to care for the Presidio habitat." They wanted to make an impact and give back to the parks and volunteer community in other ways, so they decided to include the Parks Conservancy in their estate plan. They created a bequest gift to be shared equally in support of the



Alcatraz Historic Gardens volunteer program and the NPS native habitat restoration volunteer program.

We're truly grateful to Jean and Bharat for all the ways they contribute to the health of our landscapes and our volunteer community.

To learn more about legacy gifts, contact Audrey L. Yee, Esq. at [ayee@parksconservancy.org](mailto:ayee@parksconservancy.org) or (415) 561-3016.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT:  
MAKING PARKS WELCOMING WITH VIBRANT ART!



**AT THIS CRITICAL MOMENT** in our nation's history, more people need access to the wonders provided by our national parks. That's why we're partnering with artists and activists like Favianna Rodriguez to make our parks more welcoming to the many vibrant communities that call the Bay Area home. Through her awe-inspiring "Ancestral Futurism" installation at Presidio Tunnel Tops, Favianna created vibrant, colorful havens that resonate with joy and themes of justice, freedom, and belonging.

As a Parks Conservancy member, you know the tranquility, inspiration, and enjoyment our parks offer—experiences everyone deserves! Consider making a special additional gift today to support our efforts to make the parks even more welcoming and joyful through artwork.

Make a commitment to inclusive parks at [parksconservancy.org/springart24](https://parksconservancy.org/springart24)

Maria Durana; Paul Myers

NEW PARTNERSHIP  
HELPS PARKS AND  
PEOPLE THRIVE

**IT'S ELECTRIFYING** when people see how open space can transform a city. Our thanks to Power Station for investing in the future of parks and park leadership with a \$125,000 grant to the Parks Conservancy. We're especially grateful to Enrique Landa, who has been a longtime supporter of the parks via the Parks Conservancy Leaders Circle, for helping to make this gift a reality.

"Our partnership with GGNRA reflects our ongoing commitment to open spaces and recreation as a key part of what makes our city great," Landa said. "We are proud supporters and look forward to an ongoing partnership."

The grant will help the Parks Conservancy preserve and protect more than 82,000 acres of national parks across San Mateo, San Francisco, and Marin counties, and develop the next generation of park leadership via Crissy Field Center youth programs. Thanks for your dedication to parks!



NAME THAT PARK



**THIS ISSUE:** Stretching nine miles, this picture-perfect park reflects the region's ranching past. Keep it moo-ving on the trail and you can even experience two national parks in one trip! Think you know where this is? Follow us on Instagram [@ParksConservancy](https://www.instagram.com/ParksConservancy) to submit your guess!



**LAST ISSUE:** If you didn't recognize this park via the photo, you might have recognized its fabled story as the Parks Conservancy's signature project. It's Crissy Field, of course! This icon was transformed from an abandoned airfield into a beloved national park site. Pictured here is the restored wetland marsh, a favorite walk.

Alison Taggart-Barone; Paul Myers





## THE SPLENDOR OF THE ALCATRAZ HISTORIC GARDENS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Just in time to celebrate its 20th anniversary, there's a new website for the famous lush landscapes of Alcatraz Island. Discover more about the rich history of gardening on the Rock, what plants you'll see during your next visit, our sustainable practices, and how you can get involved in preserving the gardens. Start your tour at [alcatrazgardens.org](https://alcatrazgardens.org)



## GET HEALTHY IN THE PARKS—AND LEARN THE SCIENCE BEHIND IT

Experiencing the outdoors can be a small act that has profound health benefits. Whether venturing out your front door, cruising down a tree-lined street, or visiting your neighborhood park, surrounding yourself in green spaces is profoundly healing cognitively, emotionally, and physically. Find out how at [parksconservancy.org/healthbenefits](https://parksconservancy.org/healthbenefits)



Calypso orchid



## PETAL TO THE METAL: OUR FAVORITE SPOTS TO (SAFELY) VIEW WILDFLOWERS

It's a popular time to visit the parks to see blooms. But where do you go and how do you enjoy the wildflowers safely? See our experts' top picks for secret wildflower spots at [parksconservancy.org/wildflowertrails](https://parksconservancy.org/wildflowertrails)

Ryan Curran White; Alison Taggart-Barone; Kelly Sullivan

## BRING YOUR FRIENDS OUT TO THE PARKS!

We've got lots of opportunities for getting out in the parks coming up: Join us for Parks4All: Brewfest on July 27, our Trails Forever Dinner on Alcatraz Island on Oct. 19, and special Pride events throughout June. See the latest at [parksconservancy.org/events](https://parksconservancy.org/events)



Find all our links from this issue in one spot, and some special bonus items, by visiting [parksconservancy.org/spring24](https://parksconservancy.org/spring24) or simply scan the QR code below with your phone camera:



GATEWAYS

SPRING 2024  
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Brittany Hosea-Small; Charlotte Fiorito





What's your favorite activity in the parks? These people enjoyed a sunny day on Mt. Tam. Find your endless possibilities at [parksconservancy.org](https://parksconservancy.org) today.





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(415) 4R-PARKS [parksconservancy.org](https://parksconservancy.org)

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The National Park Service was created in 1916 to preserve America's natural, cultural, and scenic treasures and to provide for their enjoyment by future generations.

(415) 561-4700 [nps.gov/goga](https://nps.gov/goga)



**The Presidio Trust**

Responsible for transforming the Presidio—in partnership with the National Park Service—from an historic Army post into a new kind of national park, the Presidio Trust is leading the nation's largest historic preservation project, restoring the park's buildings and landscapes, and creating engaging programs.

(415) 561-5300 [presidio.gov](https://presidio.gov)

