

Golden Gate Audubon Use of ACWC Fish and Wildlife Propagation Grant 2018

(Part 1) Expanded Lake Merritt Docent Program



Enjoying a spotting scope view

With funding from AC Wildlife Commission grant, Golden Gate Audubon expanded its docent program at Lake Merritt during 2018. This year, we grew this program enrollment by 42% and trained a larger cohort of 10 docents for conducting public interpretation on weekends along the lake trail. For safety reasons, we prefer our docents to work together in teams of at least two. With this expanded group of docents, this season GGAS provided (free) public interpretation at the lake focused on the colonial waterbirds for 2-3 peak-hours on 10 different weekend shifts during the spring-summer breeding season for the lake's iconic colonial waterbirds (Black-crowned Night Herons, Snowy Egrets, & Double-crested Cormorants).

Our docents offer passersby the chance to view the birds using binoculars and/or spotting scopes that enable people to see these dramatic birds very clearly. Docents share info about the birds' natural history and answer questions about the bird colonies and the "lake" habitat. Although we don't know the precise number of people served by our docents' interpretation or chances to view birds through binoculars and scopes, it's estimated that at least a few hundred to several hundred people gained a deeper view and appreciation of the birdlife through our docents' presence on every weekend shift.



Docent shows kids the Cormorant Nests

Because the heronry relocation effort became publicly visible during 2018, our docents also got to share the inspiring story of the cooperation among Golden Gate Audubon, the City of Oakland, two housing development projects, and a reputable environmental consultancy to help #OaklandHeron.

(Part 2) Public Signage about Colonial Nesting Waterbirds

Originally, when Golden Gate Audubon applied for \$10K in Alameda Wildlife Commission grant funds, we aimed to expand public interpretive signage along Lake Merritt trail to highlight the most iconic birds that can be seen there. Toward that end, we sought preliminary feedback from public entities about our signage concepts and the sample artwork we had commissioned.



Original paintings of BCN Heron adult and fledgling by artist, L. Kernodle for Golden Gate Audubon

We were granted \$5K of our \$10,000 request for 2018. It became clear that new graphically-compelling interpretive signage about birdlife on the lakefront would not be achievable with the limited funding and remaining time for the 2018 grant.



Partial series of original paintings of Snowy Egrets and Black-crowned Night Herons at various ages created by artist L. Kernodle for GGAS

Instead, GGAS re-purposed the artwork already commissioned for shoreline interpretive signage for a larger public mural project in Oakland. Collaborating with one of our development partners so that our artwork of herons and egrets at various ages and nesting stages could be applied, instead, to an even larger tableau: a huge public mural in the downtown corridor neighborhood by the large U.S. Post Office at 13th & Alice.

Holland Partner Group (HPC) is one of the developers creating new much-needed housing in the downtown corridor area precisely where the herons had been nesting in recent years. HPC had hired the environmental consulting firm that's managing the downtown heronry relocation. Since HPC was planning to encircle their full city-block construction site with both fencing and a plywood retention wall, Golden Gate Audubon decided to work with them to use digital versions of our painting series in order to extend and substantially augment the mural that would encircle their construction site.



Painted artwork was digitally made to look like Images from herons' photo album

The addition of more artwork enabled the mural to wrap around three sides of the entire city block, bounded by 13th Street, Alice, and 14th Street, encircling HPC's active construction site. Installed in December 2018, the mural has served multiple purposes and has been warmly received in the neighborhood. First, it lets the neighbors know that those popular birds are not being disregarded even as Oakland grows. Instead, the birds are the focus of a an ambitious public-private cooperative effort to entice the birds to return to much safer more naturalistic habitat back at Lake Merritt. Second, it provides an aesthetic enhancement for the neighborhood so near to the Malonga Casquelourd Arts Center just down the block.

While the building construction for HPC's future multi-story apartment building is ongoing, the neighbors have something much more attractive than construction fencing facing them: a beautiful colorful mural featuring herons and egrets! Finally, the mural has served to inhibit graffiti on that block because even (most) taggers seem to respect public artwork, especially murals.

In a future grant, we hope to re-purpose digital versions of the artwork to create and print colorful interpretive brochures about the iconic colonial nesting waterbirds at Lake Merritt.



*Artwork repurposed into polaroid-like frames
Appear throughout the mural*

