



## ***NEWS RELEASE***

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### **BAY AREA BANDING STATION AND VISITOR'S CENTER ALLOWS CLOSE-UP OBSERVATION OF THOUSANDS OF WILD BIRDS**

CARMEL, Ind.—March 9, 2005 — A familiar aphorism claims that a bird in hand is worth two in the bush, and that certainly holds true for people fascinated by the characteristics and behaviors of wild birds. Now bird enthusiasts can get an amazingly close-at-hand look at thousands of birds, just minutes north of San Francisco.

Ornithologists at the PRBO Conservation Science facility in Stinson Beach (also known as the Point Reyes Bird Observatory) capture and band about 2,500 birds each year to deepen our understanding of how they live and what is involved in their annual migrations.

A \$30,000 grant from the Wild Birds Unlimited Pathways To Nature Conservation Fund has made it possible for visitors to get a firsthand look at both the process and the birds themselves. The grant funded renovations to the Palomarin Field Station Visitor Center and Bird Banding Lab.

As visitors hike along the “netting trail,” they can see demonstrations of the mist nets the PRBO staff uses to safely capture birds, and watch as experienced handlers gently remove them. In the banding lab, they can watch as the birds are identified, measured, weighed, and marked with tiny metal leg bands that are inscribed with unique numbers and instructions as to where to send information if the birds are recaptured. The birds are then released.

The Point Reyes area is also home to abundant bird life, making it an excellent site for birdwatchers. A trail from the visitor's center winds through the coastal scrub forest, home to species such as Bushtit, Wrentit, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, and many others. Other nearby areas draw shorebirds and waterbirds like grebes, duck and coots, as well as other interesting species such as Brown Creeper, Nuthatch, Winter Wren, Sapsuckers and owls. To learn more about the Palomarin Field Station Visitor Center and Bird Banding Lab and everything else PRBO has to offer, visit [www.prbo.org](http://www.prbo.org).

The original and largest franchise system of backyard birdfeeding and nature specialty stores with over 300 locations throughout the North America, Wild Birds Unlimited established the Pathways To Nature Conservation Fund in 1999 as part of its mission to bring people and nature together. Funded by a contribution from every Wild Birds Unlimited store, Pathways To Nature has provided nearly \$740,000 in grants to 25 environmental education and wildlife viewing projects. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation partners with the company in this effort, using federal funds and a challenge grant program to match the grants, thereby increasing their impact. More details on the Pathways to Nature program are available at [www.pathwaystonature.com](http://www.pathwaystonature.com).

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