

Introduction

While the Sacramento region is often overshadowed by the Pacific Coast and the Sierra Nevada, it is a birding destination in its own right. The diversity of habitats, from wetlands, rivers, riparian forest, grasslands, oak woodlands, and chaparral provide shelter and food for well over 300 species of birds, whether they are permanent residents, seasonal visitors, or migrants just passing through. It nearly goes without saying that the concentration of waterfowl wintering in Central Valley refuges preserves, and agricultural lands is among nature's finest spectacles. Less often appreciated is the Valley's importance to birds of prey, where some of the highest concentrations of wintering raptors in North America occur—despite the rapid pace of development in our open spaces. Songbird diversity and abundance is no less impressive, with excellent sites for viewing migrating warblers, and astounding numbers of wintering sparrows. Add to the list heron and egret rookeries, wintering Sandhill Cranes, Valley specialties like Yellow-billed Magpie and Tricolored Blackbird, and California specialties like Oak Titmouse, Wren-tit, and California Thrasher. There is much of interest for the local birder throughout the year, and much to tempt visitors from outside the area.

This fourth edition of *Birding in the Sacramento Region* provides details on visiting over 110 locations. Since the last edition was completed, some of the region's most productive sites, such as the City of Davis Wetlands, have become accessible to birders. In many cases, the site descriptions are written by the people who are the most familiar with these locations, who have visited them throughout the year, and over the years. Their fondness for their favorite birding sites is easy to appreciate, and explains why you will want to visit them too. Whether you are looking for a particular species, or to experience a particular avian phenomenon, this guide will point you to sites with proven track records. Locals, especially, may wonder why their favorite site is not included. There are hundreds of others that could have been. Limitations of space and time required us to go to press with a far from complete catalog of the region's productive birding areas. Many of the included sites are in the immediate Sacramento area, while a few are a little farther afield. Nearly all are less than an hour's drive away, while a few take you into the Coast Range or the Sierra. With the increased cost of fuel—both financially and environmentally—finding places to bird closer to home is becoming more important. We hope that readers will enjoy visiting the sites described herein, and will be inspired to find a few new sites of their own—some of which may appear in future editions of this book.

Directions and Maps: Unless otherwise noted, the directions for each site begin in downtown Sacramento. In most cases, mileages begin at the junction of Interstate 5 and Highway 50. Detailed turn by turn directions follow.

Our maps editor, Subhash Chand, has plotted each location on a Google Map (used with permission, © 2008 Google Tele Atlas), with the exception of the map for River-ton-Crystal Basin, which remains from the third edition. Many of these locations are also plotted on an interactive map on the Sacramento Audubon Society Web site. You can map the route from your house, or click on links with additional information.



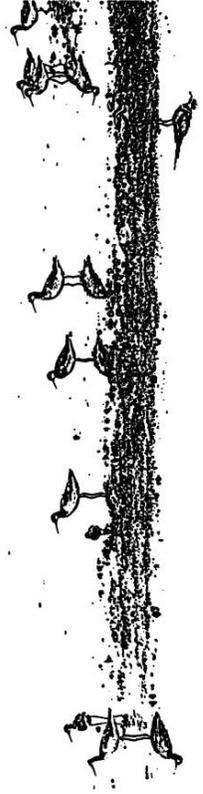
Hazards: As with any other activity, birding comes with some risks. Caution and common sense should always be heeded when traveling to and visiting any of the sites in this book. It has become a cliché to say that driving is the greatest hazard for nearly any activity, but that cannot be emphasized enough. Many of the roads in the region were not designed for the increasingly heavy traffic they experience today. Many of the most productive birding sites are becoming more dangerous each year. Scott Road, for example, which was once a quiet rural byway, is now heavily traveled by speeding commuters looking for a shortcut to Folsom. Please be careful when driving this and other roads, and PULL COMPLETELY OFF THE ROAD before looking for birds.

In any urban environment, use caution and go with others when possible. Some of the site guides have specific information about

particular human hazards, though actual confrontations are extremely rare. Local birders have had vehicles broken into on a number of occasions. When possible, avoid parking in remote lots that allow thieves to break into your car without witnesses. Also, be alert for cyclists on area bike trails.

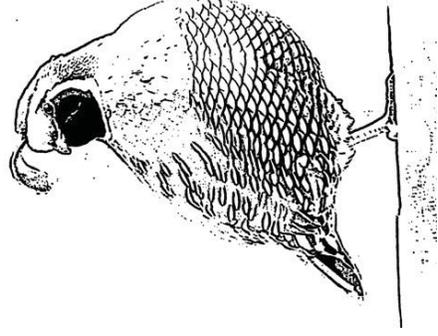
Among the greatest natural hazards are mosquitoes, which can carry West Nile Virus and other diseases. Carry repellent with you. Ticks can be particularly unpleasant in some areas. Avoid brushing against grass and other vegetation whenever possible. The larger "dog ticks" are of less concern than the tiny "deer ticks" that can carry Lyme Disease. Be particularly alert for deer ticks in the chaparral and oak woodlands on either side of the Valley. A high percentage of deer ticks in the Auburn and Foresthill area have been shown to carry Lyme Disease. Other hazards include rattlesnakes, especially in the foothills, and mountain lions—there is one recorded death from a mountain lion attack in our region. Learn to identify poison oak (there are many sites on the Internet dedicated to this plant). It can be transmitted in winter when the leaves have fallen. Nobody is immune to poison oak, though some are far more sensitive than others. All the potential hazards cannot possibly be enumerated, though there is additional information in some of the site descriptions. Caution and common sense are always advised.

Acknowledgments: This edition is built upon the work of those who wrote and edited the previous three editions: William C. Dillinger edited the second edition in 1981. He wrote that the first edition was assembled from articles printed in the *OBSERVER*, with a special mention of Betty Kimball, who started it all with her 1964 article "Where to Look Around You." June C. Persson edited the major update in 1998. There is a strong birding tradition in the Sacramento region going back many decades. The Sacramento Christmas Bird Count began in 1949, and the Sacramento Audubon Society was formed in 1950. Much of the knowledge of where to go birding has been distilled over the years, through the generations, and finds its way into the pages of this book. Some of the site descriptions are virtually unchanged from previous editions, except for formatting and standardizing directions. Others are completely new.



The following authors wrote one or more site descriptions for this guide: Wayne Blunk, Carl Burke, Joe Ceriani, Bill Clark, Jeanne Clark, Chris Conard, Brennan Davis, Natalie Fenner, Tim Fitzer, Maureen Geiger, Brian Gilmore, Ed Greaves, Ed Harper, Pete Hayes, Scott Hoppe, Amy Hopperstad, Joan Humphrey, Dave Johnson, Kimya Lambert, Mike Lippsmeyer, Tim Manolis, Mary Beth Metcalf, Barbara Mohr, June C. Persson, Jim Rowoth, Cecil Smith, Evelyn Smith, Jo Smith, Bruce Swinehart, and David Yee. The San Joaquin Audubon Society graciously allowed us to reprint two of their site descriptions from *Birding In and Around San Joaquin County*.

Subhash Chand's work on the maps was particularly important. He provided the final push to get the project completed as it was running out of steam after three years of sporadic effort. Roger Jones provided valuable technical assistance. Kimya Lambert carefully reviewed the drafts of each chapter.



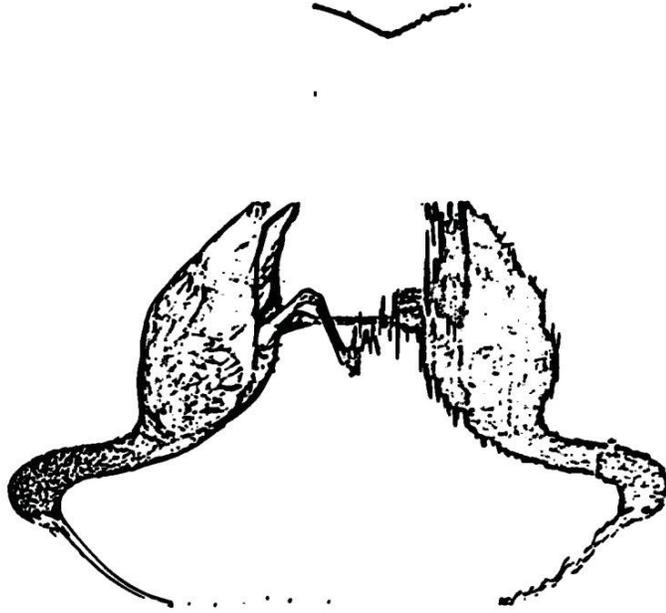
Graphics: The graphics in this edition are photographs that have been filtered to produce a woodcut print effect.

The following photographers have allowed their work to be used: Daniel Lee Brown, Chris Conard, Roger Jones, Ray Rozema, and Dan Tankersley.

The cover artwork is by Daniel Lee Brown, depicting three characteristic species of the Sacramento region: Nuttall's Woodpecker, California Thrasher, and Yellow-billed Magpie.

Birding in the Sacramento Region Committee: The committee reviewed the previous edition, identified new sites to be included, contacted authors, and wrote or updated sections as needed.

Carla Barbaro, Chris Conard (editor), Maureen Geiger (assistant editor), and June C. Persson. Subhash Chand edited the maps.



For information about the Sacramento Audubon Society, including membership, visit sacramentoaudubon.org