



# The *OBSE*RVER

Sacramento Audubon Society

## General Meeting

There will be no general meeting for the month of December. Our next meeting will be held January 19, 2006 and our speaker will be Susan Snyder talking about the California Grizzly Bear. In February Blake Matheson will be speaking on "The Birds of Olde Europe". Happy Holidays to all and see you next year.

Sally Riggs, Program Chair



## Sacramento Audubon Chapter Board Meetings

Board Meetings of the Sacramento Audubon Society are held the last Tuesday of the month. There will be no meeting in December. The next meeting will be January 31, 2006 at 7pm at the SMUD Building, 6301 S Street, Sacramento.

## Mission Statement Sacramento Audubon Society

As a Chapter of the National Audubon Society, we will focus on conservation and environmental education to ensure that the Sacramento region's natural ecosystems and diverse bird populations are preserved, restored, and made available for study and enjoyment.

## Field Trip Findings

**Upper Sunrise (11/13)** - Great weather and 60 species were enjoyed by ten birders along the American River Parkway. Leader Mark Martucci said highlights included eight Phainopeplas in one group, a male Barrow's Goldeneye and a great look at a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. Also, a very cooperative River Otter swam around a small pond on the north side of the river for at least 10 minutes before the group moved on.

**William Pond Park (11/10)** - Leader Jack Hiehle's group recorded Osprey, White-tailed Kite, Cooper's Hawk, California Quail, Spotted Sandpiper, Fox Sparrow and Greater Yellowlegs.

**Sacramento National Wildlife Area (11/10)** - Five birders enjoyed this mid-week outing in unseasonably warm weather, leader Dan Tankersley reported. "A full day in the field provided 61 species, with great opportunities to compare Ross's and Snow Geese side by side. While the geese had not arrived in expected numbers, the ducks were well represented, with Northern Pintail being the species with the highest number on the refuge by far. We enjoyed watching an adult Golden Eagle flying low over geese in the fields, and watching the geese rise almost in unison. When the eagle tired of harassing the geese, it moved over different ponds to give the ducks the same thrill."

**Bodega Bay (11/5)** - Dan Brown has led many trips to Bodega Bay but this was one of the better ones he said. "Weather was great - no wind and warm, and a very high tide had pushed the birds close to the shore. We were able to drive to within a few yards of a mixed flock of about 1,000 Godwits and Willets, etc," he said. "The tide also pushed the birds up onto the rocks of the jetties. The north jetty was covered with Dunlin from about halfway out to the end, and the south jetty was covered with gulls,

pelicans, turnstones and Surfbirds, along with 11 Black Oystercatchers." Other highlights were Red-necked Grebe, Red Knot, Thayer's Gull, Brant, five Peregrine Falcon sightings (maybe only one or two birds) and one female Harlequin Duck.

**Serrano Parkway, Eldorado Hills (10/30)** Leader Maureen Geiger reported: "We had wonderful weather for our trip near Serrano Parkway and along New York Creek. Twenty of us chalked up almost 40 species. Two highlights: the gorgeous Red-shouldered Hawk sitting close was well seen, ripping some hapless furry creature to shreds and chowing down. The other was a tiny hummingbird nest on the trail along New York Creek."

**Calaveras Big Trees State Park (10/29)** "Bird numbers were low on this trip, but we did see a Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglets, and Chestnut-backed and Mountain Chickadees," leader Cathie Lazier reported. "There were many interesting fungi as a result of recent rains, and the dogwoods, Black Oak and Big-leaf Maple were all in nice color. The Big Trees were big as usual, and very impressive."

**Bannister Park (10/27)** - Leader Jack Hiehle reported this American River Parkway site yielded Ring-necked Pheasant, Hermit Thrush, Phainopepla, and Spotted Sandpiper.

**Bobelaine Sanctuary (10/23)** - A White-faced Ibis seen en route to the refuge was a good beginning on this gorgeous day with blue skies and crisp morning temperatures that warmed to 80 degrees. Cedar Waxwings were found in great numbers. Varied Thrush, Great Horned Owl and Band-tailed Pigeon were good finds, along with a beaver crossing the river, leader Carla Barbaro reported. Others

*Findings* continued on page 3

# Field Trips

## Field Trip Information

For questions regarding the trip or checking the status of the trip in case of unfavorable weather conditions, please call the trip leader first. If he/she cannot be reached, call the scheduler Maureen Geiger, 444-0804, mkgeiger@comcast.net., for trips through December 11. For Christmas counts and trips from December 26 through January 15 call the scheduler Tim Fitzer, 961-5871, spskua@aol.com.

Plan to pool cars and share gas expenses with the driver. FRS radios can be helpful on non-local trips. Starting times are the actual time the trip leaves the meeting place. Try to arrive early, especially if you want driving directions or plan to carpool. Groups must make prior arrangements with the trip leader.



Daniel Kilby

### Thursday, December 1, 8am-noon Nimbus Fish Hatchery

**Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777**

Walk down the American River to look for diving ducks, kingfisher, wintering gulls and other wildlife along the River. Jack's knowledge of this area always assures an interesting and informative trip. Meet in the parking lot of the Fish Hatchery off Hazel Boulevard.

### Saturday, December 3, Daybreak American River Natural History Association

**(A.R.N.H.A.) Bird Count**

**Compiler: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777**

Join Jack and other volunteers to assist with this annual count of birds and other creatures along the American River Parkway. Results of this count are important to future planning for the Parkway, and the goal is to have 11 teams of two or more persons each. This count differs from other Christmas Counts in that teams count species rather than total numbers of each species. Contact Jack for details, team assignments and meeting and compilation locations.

### Sunday, December 4, 7:30am Sharp Cosumnes River Preserve

**Leader: Brian Gilmore, 451-9146**

**e-mail: b2gilmore712@comcast.net**

Join Brian at this Nature Conservancy area 20 minutes south of Sacramento. He will search the ponds and fields on Desmond Road for Sandhill Cranes, shorebirds, ducks and geese, and the radio tower for the often-present Peregrine Falcon. Walks along the boardwalk, bridge and trail areas should turn up other interesting species in this rich riparian area. This trip will last until late morning.

### Tuesday, December 6, 8am-noon Sailor Bar Area

**American River Parkway**

**Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777**

Join Jack in exploring the plants, birds and animals of this riparian corridor along the River. Jack will share his broad expertise of the usual wintering residents of this area. From Winding Way turn south on Kenneth, then east on Emperor Street to the end.

### Saturday, December 10, 8am-noon Sun City, Lincoln

**Leader: Dave Pearson, 408-4273**

**e-mail: capdavid@2xtreme.net**

Explore the varied habitat of the Lincoln hills with Dave who knows this area well. He will be checking the ponds and other nearby sites for ducks and shorebirds as well as the "grand canyon of Lincoln Hills" (otherwise known as the Canyon Oaks Trail) for sparrows, other winter residents and raptors. Take Hwy. 65 north, turn right on Twelve Bridges Drive, left on East Lincoln, right on Del Webb Blvd., and follow to the Meridians Restaurant. Meet Dave in front of the lodge in the parking lot. This trip will end late morning.

### Saturday, December 10, 8am-noon Sacramento County Bufferlands Wetlands and Waterfowl

**Contact: Chris Conard, 362-5942**

**e-mail: chris.conard@comcast.net**

Tour one of the wetland areas within the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District Bufferlands in Elk Grove. The wetlands and waterfowl tour offers a chance to see many bird and mammal species including waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, beavers and coyotes. Tour participants will enjoy a short walk guided by a Bufferlands staff biologist who will explain current manage-

ment and restoration techniques. Space is limited. The meeting location is weather-dependant, so please contact Roger Jones at 875-9174 or jonesro@saccounty.net during the week preceding the event for exact meeting location and directions.

### Sunday, December 11, 8am Lincoln Grasslands

**Leader: Tim Fitzer, 961-5871**

**e-mail: spskua@aol.com**

Tim will be checking this Placer County area for the many wintering hawks and sparrows that call this area home during winter months. He will also be looking for winter rarities that flock with Horned Larks and sparrows in the Brewer Road area. Birding and lunch at the Chamberlain Cemetery will be followed by more birding along the rural roads on the way to Camp Far West Reservoir. Meet Tim at the Park and Ride lot on Highway 99 at Elkhorn Boulevard just north of downtown Sacramento and the I-5/99 split. This trip will last until mid-afternoon.

## CHRISTMAS COUNT DATES

**Please call Tim Fitzer, 961-5871, or refer to the November Observer for information on dates and contact numbers for additional Christmas counts, including:**

**Saturday, December 17**

Woodfords and Auburn

**Sunday, December 18**

Stockton and Putah Creek

**Monday, December 19**

Benicia (Grizzly Island)

**Sunday, January 1, 2006**

Angwin and Grass Valley

Additional dates and locations can also be found at <http://natureali.org/cbcs.htm>

**Monday, December 26**  
**Sacramento Christmas Count**  
**Compiler: Cliff Hawley, 300-2495**  
**e-mail: yellowhammerca@gmail.net**

**Wednesday, December 28**  
**Lincoln Christmas Count**  
**Compiler: Ed Pandolfino, 486-9174**  
**e-mail: ERPfromCA@aol.com**

**Sunday, January 1, 2006**  
**Folsom Christmas Count**  
**Compiler: Chris Conard, 362-5942**  
**E-mail: chris.conard@comcast.net**

This is a local count, lots of fun, and we always need your help no matter how inexperienced. It's a good way to learn. Call Chris and join the count.

**Tuesday, January 3, 2006**  
**8am to 12pm**  
**Goethe Park**  
**Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777**

Join Jack for a morning walk through this beautiful park along the American River. Meet Jack at the end of Arden Way on the north side of the river and we will walk across the bridge into Goethe Park.

**Tuesday, January 3, 2006**  
**Rio Cosumnes Count**  
**Compiler: Andy Engilis**  
**(530) 752-0364**  
**E-mail aengilisjr@ucdavis.ed**

**Saturday, January 7, 7am**  
**Post Christmas Count Coastal Birding**  
**Trip Leaders: Mark Cudney**  
**987-2422, mcudney@aol.com**  
**Tim Fitzer, 961-5871, spskua@aol.com**

This trip could be to Pt. Reyes, Bodega Bay or both. Mark and Tim will be looking for the rare and vagrant birds seen on various coastal Christmas Counts. Be ready for a faster paced trip for the more experienced birder. We will meet at the Park & Ride on the left hand side of the West Capitol Blvd. exit just before the causeway on I-80 west. Bring lunch, liquids and warm clothes and be prepared for a full day. If you have personal band radios they are great for keeping in contact with the group.

**Sunday, January 8, 7:30am**  
**Bobelaine Sanctuary Walk**  
**Leader: June Persson, 481-9916**

Join June for a New Years Day stroll through the riparian woods. There are many birds and mammals and June knows just where to find them. Take I-5 north to Hwy 99 towards Yuba City. Two miles after it crosses the Feather River, turn right on

Laurel Ave., follow it to the end, and meet in the parking lot. Bring some holiday leftovers for a lunch after the walk.

**Friday, January 13, 7am**  
**Pt. Reyes Mammal Trip**  
**Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777**

Gray Whales, Elephant Seals, Tule Elk and Axis Deer will be the focus of Jack's trip. He will of course not ignore birds, but they will be a sidelight of the trip. Bring lunch, liquids and warm clothes as the trip will last into the afternoon. Meet Jack across the street from where the 535 Bistro once stood on Fulton Ave, between Munroe Ave. and Fair Oaks Blvd.

**Saturday, January 14, 8am**  
**Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge**  
**Leaders: Lisa Moraga, 455-4786**  
**lmoraga03@yahoo.com**  
**Brian Gilmore, 451-9146**  
**b2gilmore71@comcast.net**

Sacramento Refuge is home to thousands of wintering ducks and geese which attract Peregrine Falcons! There is a 3.7 mile route with a high viewing platform that offer great looks at the many species of waterfowl. On our return we will take County Rd. 16 through open raptor country, which can be spectacular. We hope to see the Hungarian Kuvar sheep guard dogs on our way to Zamora. This trip will last into mid-afternoon, so bring lunch, liquids and a warm jacket. We will meet at the Jack in the Box parking lot just off I-5 North, exit Rd. 102 on your right, as you approach Woodland. Personal band radios are a great way to keep in communication with each other, so bring them along. Scopes will be helpful. This is a fun trip you will not want to miss.

**Sunday, January 15, 7:30am**  
**Salt Springs Valley**  
**Leader: Tim Fitzer, 961-5871**  
**spskua@aol.com**

This area is located in western Calaveras County about an 1-1/2 hour drive from Sacramento. The open valley and its lake are home to many wintering ducks, hawks, eagles, owls and grassland birds. This is a unique area you will not want to miss. The trip will last into the afternoon so bring lunch, liquids and warm clothing. We will meet at the Park & Ride on the east side of Hwy 99 at the Sheldon Rd. exit. Call for an alternate meeting place. Bring scopes and personal band radios.

## Field Trip Findings

Continued from page 1

among the 49 species counted included Wood Ducks, Swainson's Hawks, Nuttall's and Acorn woodpeckers, and Fox Sparrow.

**Shadow Glen/Snowberry Creek (10/22)**  
Leader Lea Landry was joined by 10 birders, including four excellent leaders (pressure, pressure!), on a walk along a wonderful trail in Orangevale on a beautiful day. They were rewarded by good looks at 39 species of the usual fall suspects in oak and riparian habitats. Highlights included close-up views of a beautiful Red-shouldered Hawk, a patient Hermit Thrush, and a lovely Lincoln's Sparrow.

Pete Hayes

## ONE OF THE YEAR'S BEST RARE BIRD FINDS

Two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers from Asia, turned up at the Vic Fazio Yolo Bypass Wildlife area in November, drawing an influx of birders from all over to the East Yolo County site in hopes of seeing it. Most descriptions likened it to a Pectoral Sandpiper, having a buffy breast with little streaking, a rufous cap and yellow-green legs.

Frequent Sacramento Audubon trip leader Maureen Geiger offered this account: "I had the great fortune to see clearly, closely and for a while the brighter of the two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers on November 2. I raced out there early in the morning while Cliff Hawley and Daryl Colgron were there and was able to piggy-back on their find. It was a lovely bird, looking exactly like the juvenile in Sibley and I felt verly lucky as it was a life bird for me. There were a couple of Pectoral Sandpipers nearby that morning, too. I had seen them at Yolo before but never so close. This really is a great time to go there - all that water and all that wonderful new habitat. It's growing up."

## Seasonal Observations

Continued from page 4

Maureen Geiger, Richard Hall, Steve Hampton, Ed Harper, Cliff Hawley, Karen Hochgraf, Waldo Holt, Dave Johnson, Mary Kiernan, Jon Katz, Dan Kopp, Lea Landry, Jeri Langham, Sami LaRocca, Jim Laughlin, Randy Lewis, Erica Lindgren, Ron Melcer, Lisa Moraga, Anne Pellegrini, Michael Perrone, Mary Schiedt, Darell Slotton, John Sterling, Dan Tankersley, John Trochet, and Neil Whiting.

Chris Conard

# Seasonal Observations

**October 1 to October 31**  
**Rare and Unusual Bird Reports**  
**783-2331**

The avian highlight of the month came on 10/31 in the form of a juvenile **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** along the auto tour route at Yolo Wildlife Area. A second juvenile, somewhat brighter than the first, was found the following day, and reports continued sporadically through 11/12. These striking Siberian shorebirds are very rare but annual fall vagrants along the California coast, though much less common inland. Somewhat surprisingly, there are six previous records for Yolo County, but this was the first in over a decade. Several **Pectoral Sandpipers**, to which this species is closely related, were also noted in the area. The excellent habitat along the tour route supported 100-200 **Wilson's Snipe**. Another shorebird highlight was a **Ruff** in Placer County near Brewer and Catlett Rds on 10/29 and 10/30. This species, which had become almost dependable in Yolo County from 2000 to 2003, has only put in a few brief appearances since.

As expected, migrant songbird reports slowed down from the highs of August and September, but there were still several interesting finds. A **Blackpoll Warbler** was reported from the Tall Forest at Cosumnes River Preserve (CRP) on 10/7. Also reported on 10/7 was a **Blackpoll Warbler** along Babel Slough and an **Eastern Phoebe** from UC Davis. Decent numbers of **Townsend's Warblers**, **Black-throated Gray Warblers**, and **Western Tanagers** continued through the month. A **Hammond's Flycatcher** and a **Brown Creeper** were found at CRP on 10/15, and another **Brown Creeper** was found at CRP on 10/22. Single **Evening Grosbeaks** were reported at Slide Hill Park in Davis on 10/11 and at CRP on 10/22.

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An early morning at the Howard Ranch on 10/18, private land in southeastern Sacramento County, produced a **Northern Pygmy-Owl**, 5 **Burrowing Owls**, 12 **Common Poorwills**, 15 **Phainopeplas**, and 4 **Lawrence's Goldfinches**. Evening trips produced **Common Poorwills** and **Burrowing Owls** along Michigan Bar Rd, with the latter species also found along Meiss Rd. While

rare but regular at the Howard Ranch in winter, **Burrowing Owls** had not been previously recorded along Michigan Bar and Meiss Rds. These probably represent fall dispersals rather than year-round residents.

Other interesting reports include a **Common Loon** near the Gristmill Access to the American River from 10/28 to 11/10, and continuing **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** from Putah Creek, UC Davis, and Willowbank Ditch. On 10/11, there were late reports of a **Western Kingbird** in Winters and a **Bullock's Oriole** near Davis. **Hairy Woodpeckers** were reported several times near Lake Solano, and more surprisingly, from the Putah Creek Sinks on 10/18. A **Long-eared Owl** was found roosting at a Sacramento County operations yard on Bradshaw Ave. from 10/10 to 10/12. A male **Costa's Hummingbird** was found in a Sacramento backyard sporadically from early August to 10/9.

Thanks to the following for their reports (the majority were taken from [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/central\\_valley\\_birds/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/central_valley_birds/)): Truman Aakre, Steve Abbott, Ann Becker, Brent Campos, Terry Colborn, Daryl Coldren, Sheila Deaner, Andrew Engilis, Jim Gain,

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