



The *OBSE*RVER

Sacramento Audubon Society

General Meeting

Thursday, February 16, 2006
Shepard Garden and Art Center
7:30pm General Meeting

The Birds of Olde Europe

Blake Matheson

For American birders and listers, Western Europe, and the wider Western Palearctic in general, is often the last place on their list of "must see" world birding destinations. Compared to the lavish and colorful biodiversity of the tropics, Europe is often assumed to be a downright quiet place filled with hedgerows, gardens and hordes of boring little brown birds.

"But," according to Blake Matheson, a lifelong resident of the Monterey Peninsula, "this assumption is flat wrong." And, as we shall see in tonight's presentation, "The Western Palearctic is essentially an entire additional North America right across the Atlantic, comparable in terms of habitat and species diversity. From icy tundra to sweltering deserts, deep forests and teaming swamps, Europe offers a remarkable array of fascinating, beautiful and endangered birds, many of which are endemic to the region and many more of which are representatives of exotic old world families whose strongholds lay in far flung Africa and Asia."

Blake Matheson's love of the outdoors, lead him to enroll in an elective ornithology course in high school taught by local birding legend Bob Tintle. Since that time he has

become one of the most active birders on the central coast, with many observations of rarities published in American Birds and other birding publications. This past year, while studying Ethics and Politics at Oxford University, he sought out Europe's avian denizens whenever time between exams allowed. His journeys took him to the four corners of Britain and on a month long tour of Spain's distinctive avifauna.

Matheson recently returned from the Philippines on a personal quest to see the Great Philippine Eagle, and will begin work with the World Parrot Trust at Tambopata Reserve in Southeastern Peru, monitoring the health of parrot and macaw populations this spring. But, that's a whole other presentation unto itself.

Sally Riggs
Program Chair

Sacramento Audubon meetings are held the third Thursday of the month at the Shepard Garden and Art Center in McKinley Park, located at 3330 McKinley Blvd. in Sacramento. The public is welcome.

Map details and further information can be found on our web site (www.sacramentoaudubon.org) under general meeting information.

Bobelaine Happenings

As some of you know, the sanctuary has been flooded for about three weeks due to high water releases from Oroville Dam. Since we are located within the banks of the Feather River levee system, flooding is a way of life. However, the volume of this year's flood has only occurred three times in our fifteen or so years at the sanctuary. The resulting expenditure of volunteer time and money to clean the debris and downed trees off the trails is a significant part of the sanctuary budget. Fuel and chains for the chain saws as well as fuel for the tractor to move the downed debris cuts into our normal maintenance budget. By the time you read this, barring further warm storms, the sanctuary should be open in most areas. Low areas may be muddy or have standing water, so please use extreme caution in crossing.

Bobelaine Management

IT'S A SNOWY!

Joan Humphrey had no idea that the first Snowy Owl to be recorded in California since 1978 was anywhere near as she and friends drove south from Davis on Friday the 13th of January to look for shorebirds. But when a big white bird pursued by a Northern Harrier flew in front of her car on Liberty Island Road in Solano County, the Yolo Audubon leader immediately knew it was a visitor from the open tundra of the far north. Her reaction? "I was upset. I felt I had gone into shock. I said a very strong version of 'Oh, my goodness!'"

As a longtime chapter trip leader and newsletter editor, Joan knew what her job was. She grabbed a cell phone and reported the sighting to friends who flashed the word by telephone, Internet, and phone bird box within 10 minutes, resulting in swarms of birders converging on the site throughout that day and the next. But at press time the bird, believed by some to be a young male, went missing, at least temporarily. When she first identified the owl, she wondered, "Why here?"

Dozens of Snowy sightings had been reported in recent weeks in Washington and Oregon, as avian

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Field Trip Findings

Salt Springs Valley (1/15) – This “raptor run” to western Calaveras County paid off with looks at Bald Eagles, Ferruginous Hawks, and Prairie Falcons, leader Tim Fitzer said. Also, Lewis’s Woodpeckers, Mountain Bluebirds and Vesper Sparrows. Birder John Davidson said occupants of his car, last in line in the motorcade, saw a Bobcat run across the road in front of them. “It was fast,” he said, “and only the people in my car got to see it, so we took a lot of static from the rest about feral housecats, etc.”

Point Reyes Mammal Trip (1/13) While no whales appeared, the group saw 180 Elephant Seals, many with pups, on beaches in the Chimney Rock area, leader Jack Hiehle said. The huge pinnipeds weigh as much as 5,000 pounds, and they’ve been increasing steadily since coming

under protection in the late 19th century and moving northward from Mexico to Ano Nuevo Island near Santa Cruz, the Farallon Islands off San Francisco and Point Reyes. Other mammals observed included Harbor Seals, Axis Deer, the big-antlered Spotted Deer, Black-tailed Deer, and Tule Elk.

Bobelaine Sanctuary (1/8) – “We had wonderful looks at Snow Geese, Tundra Swans and White-fronted Geese flying over,” leader June Persson reported. Wood Ducks were skittish and other birds were hard to come by on a cold, calm day, but the group enjoyed lunch at the picnic tables with glug, the Swedish beverage that June brings to these New Year’s birding traditions.

Post Christmas Count Coastal Birding (1/7) – En route to the coast the group led by Mark Cudney and Tim Fitzer saw the previously reported Blue Jay in Fairfield. Other sightings included Townsend’s Warblers, Ring-necked Ducks, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, and Hooded Mergansers.

Goethe Park (1/3) – Leader Jack Hiehle’s group spotted two pairs of Great Horned Owls, but more interesting for some was the view from the cycling and hiking bridge of five River Otters cavorting and vocalizing with loud “chips.” Jack said it was probably a family group. Also, White-tailed Kite and Common Mergansers. Horsehair worms, 12 inches long by 1/25th inch diameter, that over-winter in mud, were observed.

Pete Hayes

2005-2006 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

Rain, wind and local flooding tested the mettle of many birders participating in selected regional Christmas Bird Counts. Still, there were notable bright spots, such as Benicia’s bumper count of 170 species including a reported Blue Jay; a Red-breasted Merganser on the Folsom count, and a Hammond’s Flycatcher on the Lincoln count.

Overall, species counts were mostly below average in what Folsom count compiler Chris Conard called “horrible weather or odd circumstances.”

“With rain, there is usually a lot more time spent in the car,” he said. “Vocal species that would be counted by surveyors on foot will go under-reported. It’s my experience that the wind affects bird detectability as much or more than rain. I’d rather survey in light rain than in windy conditions.”

Avian experts are studying Christmas Count results to try to determine any West Nile virus impact on corvids such as Yellow-billed Magpies. CBC Numbers of these species were generally below average, but it wasn’t known whether this was because of West Nile, the wet weather, or some other factor.

RESULTS BY AREA:

BENICIA

A predicted stormy December 19 thankfully turned out to be a warm, windless day, and 89 field counters made the most of it to rack up the second highest species count (170

vs. 171) of Benicia CBCs going back to 1930, compiler Robin Leong reported. It also led to the highest number of birds in 10 years (177,499 vs. 164,812 in 1999).

“Benicia’s species list was large because we were lucky to find four new species,” Robin said. They were Blue Jay, Cassin’s Vireo, Great-tailed Grackle, and Cassin’s Finch. “Since it stormed for several days before the count, our sheltered Suisun, Grizzly, and Southampton bays were refuges for ducks.”

Personal highs: White-faced Ibis 20, Tundra Swan 1021, Scaup species 60,120, Ruddy Duck 11,473, Cooper’s Hawk 12, Merlin 13, Peregrine 7, Common Moorhen 71, Mourning Dove 949, Black Phoebe 261, Say’s Phoebe 77, Common Raven 72, Chestnut-backed Chickadee 180, Ruby-crowned Kinglet 376, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 11, Hermit Thrush 60, Hutton’s Vireo 18, Rufous-crowned Sparrow 22, Lincoln’s Sparrow 76 and Golden-crowned Sparrow 1726

SACRAMENTO

Weather was nice and clear for the December 26 count, but the unofficial total of 144 species was the lowest in the five years Cliff Hawley has served as compiler. Highlights included a Swainson’s Hawk, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Eurasian Wigeon, and Redhead. The wigeon and hawk were spotted in Yolo

County, the Redhead in Sacramento County along the Main Drain Canal in Natomas, and the warbler in East Lawn Cemetery.

FOLSOM

On New Year’s Day, 52 participants recorded a total of 128 species, 11 fewer than last year’s count, which took place in steady rain, compiler Chris Conard reported. Weather



Kirsten Munson

was reasonably good before noon, but the wind came up in the afternoon, sustained at 40 mph and gusting to 60 or higher. The Red-breasted Merganser reported from both sides of the

American River at Sailor Bar was only the second

count record since 1978

Other notables:

- A Pacific Loon (5th count record) on Folsom Lake between Brown’s Ravine and Mormon Island Dam.
- At least 14 Common Loons (Peninsula portion of Folsom Lake SRA), Beal’s Point, Folsom Point, Mormon Island to Brown’s Ravine.
- Peregrine Falcon, surprisingly, only a 4th count record near Nimbus Dam, and an

American Dipper (5th count record) on Sweetwater Creek.

•Other good finds included 13 Barrow's Goldeneyes, 5 Bald Eagles, 3 Ferruginous Hawks, a Merlin, a Prairie Falcon, 2 Burrowing Owls (one at Payen Road, one at Peninsula), Tree Swallow, 2 Violet Green Swallows, and 3 Great-tailed Grackles (only the third count record but likely to be regular from now on).

An American Bittern was only the 5th count record. Three Mountain Bluebirds were found from Boy's Ranch Road just off Scott Road. It was likely that one was taken by a Red-tailed Hawk. Steve Abbott reported seeing the hawk go through, catching something that looked blue, then finding only two after that.

PUTAH CREEK

Sixty birders found 130 species, including two new ones, despite heavy rain and wind. (Compiler Steve Hampton's rain gauge in Davis recorded 3.82 inches during the December 18 count.) While the Ringed Turtle-Dove and Eurasian Collared-Dove firsts are introduced species, CBCs still track them. What was "amazing" in view of the weather, Steve said, were the record high counts set or tied for nine species: Great Egret, Tundra Swan, Northern Shoveler, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Wild Turkey, Virginia Rail, Sandhill Crane (with 2, only their second time on the count), and Lincoln's Sparrow.

RIO COSUMNES

Although much of the area was inaccessible due to flooding, January 3 was a beautiful day for birding and counters responded with an unofficial 148 species, about average for the count. Compiler Andy Engilis reported these Count Circle firsts: Pacific Loon, Eurasian Collared Dove, two Caspian Terns, and a Horned Grebe (second record count).

Other highlights included 3 Barn Swallows, Mountain Bluebirds, Great-tailed Grackles, Pine Siskin, Brown Creeper, probable flock of Semipalmated Plovers, (John Trochet reported one in northern Sacramento County January 5), two Swainson's Hawks, and a Rough-legged Hawk.

LINCOLN

Compiler Ed Pandolfino rated a Hammond's Flycatcher found by Andy Engilis along Auburn Ravine Creek near Moore Road, as "best bird" on the third Lincoln CBC December 28. Seventy or so participants braved hard and steady winds that turned to partly sunny with some wind in the afternoon.

Ed reported preliminary results showed that 129 species were recorded, matching last year's total, but slightly under those of the first two years of the count. White-throated Sparrows were found in three locations.

Events & Announcements

BIRDING THE BIG SKY COUNTRY

There may still be a few places left on Ed Harper's popular Montana tour this summer. Two segments are offered, the first including Yellowstone NP (June 10-17) and the second including Glacier NP (June 18-25), or opt for the entire package since some very different areas will be covered. Tour size is being kept small (7 or 8) so that it will offer more viewing and learning opportunities for the participants. For a full itinerary, price, and availability contact Sandpiper Journeys via calidris@surewest.net or call Ed at 916-971-3311.

DON'T FORGET THESE EVENTS

The **San Diego Festival** will be held February 9 through 12, 2006 at the Marina Village Conference Center in Mission Bay. Further information and registration can be found at www.sandiegoaudubon.org/birdfest.htm

The **Salton Sea International Bird Festival** will be held February 17-20, 2006. Further information and registration can be found at www.newriverwetlands.com/saltonsea.html

Andy Engilis also found a longspur (probably the same Chestnut-collared Longspur found the next day by Cliff Hawley on Brewer Road just north of Nicolaus Road.)

Besides the Hammond's Flycatcher, the group added three other birds to the circle's total species list: Winter Wren, Sandhill Crane and Western Sandpiper.

STOCKTON

Gale force winds and relentless rains on December 18 limited species to 130 compared to the normal mid-140s and the number of participants to 35 intrepid souls, compiler Jim Rowth reported. That said, he reported these highlights:

"An Osprey showed well at Pond 13 at White Slough. Waldo had an adult Glaucous-winged Gull on Brack Tract/Woodbridge Road. Lorna Elness picked out a male Phainopepla in the Thornton area. Forty Great-tailed Grackles showed up at the golf course on Eight Mile Road, continuing their inexorable march to commonness locally, and 9 Wild Turkeys were found on Brack Tract. One new species made its debut this year, a flock of 7 Red-shouldered Parrots were observed by Kasey Foley in her neighborhood, well within the count circle."

WOODFORDS

Sacramento Auduboners' annual trek to the Sierra netted 83 species December 17, including two believed to be new for the count: an Osprey seen by Bill and Nancy Bittner and an American Crow seen by Chris Conard, Kimya Lambert and Bill Hart. Other

standouts were Northern Pygmy-Owl seen by Tim Fitzer, at Grover Hot Springs, 250 Pinyon Jays at Bill Hart's home, 15 Cassin's Finches seen by Chris and Kimya, 15 Cassin's Finches seen south of Markleville, and Herring Gull.

AUBURN

The 25th annual Auburn area count got off to a fast start in the foggy pre-dawn hours of December 17 as owlers recorded several Great Horned and Western Screech Owls. Shortly after daybreak, compiler Deren Ross reported, the fog lifted and some 45 members and friends of Sierra Foothills Audubon carried on under cloudy skies, cold temperatures and afternoon rain and recorded an above-average total of 123 species.

Better birds were 3 Mountain Bluebirds (B. Williams), 7 Black Rails (T. Beedy and M. Chainey), 1 Eared Grebe (J. Langham & Co.), 1 Swamp Sparrow (C. Hawley and Daryl Coldren), 1 Canvasback (Wayne Woodward) and 1 Peregrine Falcon (S. Hoppe, M. Tritel and Co.)

Yellow-billed Magpies were seen in most of the expected locations, but Deren said a consensus suggested that numbers were down.

Pete Hayes

Field Trips



Kirsten Munson

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 Richard Barbieri, 966-4603, for trips through March 12. Call the scheduler Mark Martucci, 722-6098 for trips from March 13 to April 16.

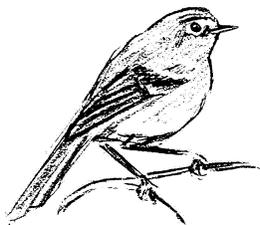
Plan to pool cars and share gas expenses with the driver. FRS radios can be helpful on non-local trips. Starting times are the actual time the trip leaves the meeting place. Try to arrive early, especially if you want driving directions or plan to carpool. Groups must make prior arrangements with the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

Wednesday, February 1, 8am **Walk along the American River** **Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777**

Join Jack on a 4-hour walk looking at native and non-native plant species, mammals, and birds. This walk is great for beginning and more experienced nature lovers. Dress warmly and bring a snack and liquid, if desired. Meet Jack at the end of Jacob Lane, off Fair Oaks Blvd.

Saturday, February 4, 8am **Gray Lodge State Wildlife Refuge & Western Sutter Buttes** **Leader: Harlan Perryman** **(530) 873-3039 or (916) 961-5871**

Join Harlan for a full action day of birding at this waterfowl magnet. Thousands of geese and ducks winter at Gray Lodge, including Eurasian Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal and Ring-necked Ducks to name a few. There are often Peregrine Falcons and Bald Eagles. On the return trip, Harlan will take the west Sutter Butte route looking for raptors and wintering sparrows.



Kirsten Munson

Bring warm clothes, liquids & lunch, and 2-way radios for a full day of fun. Meet at the Elkhorn Blvd. Park & Ride off Hwy 99 north.

Sunday, February 5, 8:30am **East Lawn Cemetery** **Leader: Mary Beth Metcalf, 456-7382**

Bring a friend for a morning walk through East Lawn. This is an excellent place to find many wintering species, and sometimes a rarity. This trip is perfect for beginning birders, is a fun morning walk, and sure beats watching TV. Meet Mary Beth at the

gate to the cemetery at the intersection of 43rd Street and Folsom Blvd. Park on 43rd Street. This walk will last for about 3 hours.

Saturday, February 11, 8am **Yolo Wildlife Area** **Leader: Richard Barbieri, 966-4603**

Join Richard on this trip to a wonderful area just minutes from downtown Sacramento. This marshland offers up a variety of birds, from sparrows and raptors to many ducks and several species of shorebirds. Given enough time Richard may drive over to the Davis Waste Water Treatment Plant for a view of what may be there. From Sacramento take I-80 across the Yolo Causeway and turn right onto the frontage road just past the causeway. Turn right at the stop sign and circle under the freeway; then make a left up onto the levee and meet Richard at the first parking lot inside the wildlife area. Bring a lunch, water, and personal band radios if you have them.

Sunday, February 12, 8am **Grizzly Island/Suisun Marsh** **State Wildlife Area** **Leader: Joe Ferreira, 983-2120**

Joe, a former resident biologist for many years on Grizzly Island, has extensive knowledge of this exceptional marsh land along with its history. The area is home to many ducks and shorebirds during the wintering months. There may even be a possibility of seeing River Otter and the majestic Tule Elk. Bring a lunch, liquids and warm clothing for a full day of adventure. Meet Joe at the Park & Ride at the West Capitol exit off I-80 just before the causeway. Call for an alternate meeting place. Bring along personal band radios if you have them.

Thursday, February 16, 8am **Parkway Walk/Estates Drive** **Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777**

This early morning walk along the American River Parkway will be in an area just up from the Watt Ave. Bridge at the end of Estates Drive in Carmichael. Join Jack on this stretch of the river as he shares with you his knowledge of plants, mammals, and of course birds in this area. Meet at the end of Estates Drive off of Fair Oaks Boulevard.

February 18 – 20, Weekend Trip **Eureka/Arcata area** **Leaders:** **Dan Brown, 362-2458** **naturestoc@aol.com** **Joe Ceriani, joeceriani@usmessage.net**

Please mark your calendars and join Dan and Joe for 3 days of birding along California's North Coast. We will be birding some of the traditional spots in the Eureka and Arcata areas, and possibly some of Joe's new favorite spots. Please contact Dan or Joe any time after January 15th, 2006, for further details.

Saturday, February 25 **Trip to North Bay Area,** **Corte Madera Marsh** **Meet at 9am in Bay Area** **Leader: Ron Storey, (707) 762-5276** **ronstorey@ronstorey.com**

Meet Ron at the "Park & Ride" at Highway 101 and Lucas Valley Road (take Smith Ranch/Lucas Valley Rd exit, which is 4.5 miles south of the junction of Highways 37 and 101 – go east and the Park & Ride is immediately after you leave the freeway on your right side) at 9am We will begin the day by driving to the Corte Madera Marsh while the tide is high to look for Clapper Rail. Corte Madera is one of the most reliable places in the North Bay to

observe Clapper Rail, and anyone who comes there this time of year is seldom disappointed. Ron may then take the group to Las Gallinas, where he's found Tufted Duck and Palm Warbler in the past, but trip destination will depend on current reported rarities. This trip is quite suitable for beginner birders who want to venture out of the areas they are familiar with and view birds either hard to find or not normally found in the Sacramento area. This is an all day trip, so bring a lunch, and wear shoes that you are not concerned about getting a little muddy. (Ron will not lead us through any real muddy areas, but the foliage is wet and ground may be a little muddy.)

The trip will probably end near Petaluma, so please join Ron for dinner at one of the many fine restaurants in Petaluma (restaurant to be determined by the group.)

**Saturday, February 25, 8am to Noon
Wetlands & Waterfowl Tour I**

Tour seasonal and permanent wetland areas at 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 2 mile walk guided by a Bufferlands staff biologist who will explain current management and restoration techniques. Space is limited. For more information on this tour please contact Kevin Cassady at 875-9196 or cassadyk@saccounty.net.

**Sunday, February 26, 7:30am
Solano Lake/Putah Creek Area
Leader: Cliff Hawley, 300-2495
yellowhammer74@yahoo.com**

Cliff has been our past Sacramento Christmas Count Compiler and is an excellent birder who knows this area well. Solano Lake is a great place to look for ducks this time of year. He will also lead the group along Putah Creek and up to Monticello Dam. Putah Creek is one of the most reliable areas to find Hooded Mergansers. Other possible species include Purple Finches, Common Mergansers, Hairy Woodpeckers, Dippers, Barrow's Goldeneye, Bufflehead, and Canyon Wrens. This trip will last into early afternoon, so bring a lunch and liquids.

**Thursday, March 2, 8am till noon
Effie Yeaw Nature Center
Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777**

Meet Jack at 8am in the parking lot of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center in Ancil

Hoffman Park. This is Jack's home base on the American River Parkway, and as you walk the trails to the river he will point out interesting plants, with information about their uses by Native Americans. Early nesting birds should be active, and Jack will be keeping an eye out for mammals as well.

**Saturday, March 4, 7am
Bodega Bay
Leader: Dan Brown, 362-2458
Naturestoc@aol.com**

Join Dan for a full day of birding and exploring the many habitats around Bodega Bay. This is often one of the best coastal birding areas, with many gulls, shorebirds and waterfowl to see, and possibly various vagrant songbirds. Meet Dan at the Park & Ride off Highway 80 in West Sacramento. Take the West Capitol Ave. exit; turn left at the light and then left again into the Park & Ride lot. This is on the North side of the freeway, not the south side lot. We will LEAVE at 7am sharp. Bring food (an option for lunch will be at The Tides snack bar), water, and warm clothing.

**Sunday, March 5, 7:30am till noon
Serrano Parkway
El Dorado Hills
Leader: Maureen Geiger
444-0804
mkgeiger@comcast.net**

Join Maureen for a leisurely walk through this riparian habitat and look for resident birds such as woodpeckers, nuthatches, towhees, wrens, bluebirds and marsh birds as well as winter warblers and sparrows. River otters are a possibility. Time permitting, a second walk along New York Creek is possible. This is a great trip for beginners and experienced birders alike. Meet at Bella Bru restaurant at the Raley's shopping center on El Dorado Hills Blvd. just off Highway 50. Trails may be muddy.

**Saturday, March 11
ARNHA Bird & Breakfast
Effie Yeaw Nature Center
Ancil Hoffman Park
Contact: 489-4918**

This morning bird walk is a fund raiser for the American River Natural History Association. Join experienced birders for an informative walk through the Nature Center grounds and share in good company during the hearty breakfast. This gathering is for those 13 years and older. For more

information and to make reservations, call the Nature Center.

**Sunday, March 12, 8am
North Natomas Area
Leader: Carl Burke, 747-8781
holbur@cwol.net**

Join Carl for a morning expedition through the agricultural area that remains in North Natomas. This area hosts a good variety of migrating ducks and shorebirds and holds the possibility of early migrants. Returning Swainson's Hawks are also a possibility and Burrowing Owls may still be found. Meet Carl at 8am at the Park & Ride on the southwest corner of Highway 99 and Elkhorn Blvd., (first exit on 99 after it splits from I-5 north).

**Thursday, March 16, 8am to noon
Sailor Bar Area
American River Parkway
Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777**

Meet Jack at the end of Emperor Drive in Fair Oaks, near Winding Way and Kenneth, for a morning walk exploring the plants, mammals and birds of this riparian corridor. A trip with Jack always turns up something of interest.

**Saturday, March 18, very early
Tall Forest Bird Count
Cosumnes River Preserve
Leader: John Trochet
Recorded Information:
684-2816 or check
www.cosumnes.org**



Meet John at the Farm Center ON TIME to join him on this monthly bird count. John has an appreciation of nature on many levels, and a trip with him is always exciting, whether it's a sighting of an elusive otter, a warbler in migration, or just some insights into the resident birds and mammals of the area. You must check the recorded information or the website a day or two before to get the exact meeting time and any other updated details.

**Sunday, March 19, 7:30am
Effie Yeaw Nature Center
Leader: Brian Gilmore, 451-9146**

Meet Brian at 7:30am in the Effie Yeaw parking lot in Ancil Hoffman Park, on Tarshes Drive off California Avenue in Fair

Field Trips Continued on page 6

Field Trips Continued from page 5

Oaks, for a morning walk along the trails and down to the river. Early nesting birds should be active. This is a good trip for beginners.

Wednesday, March 22, 7:30am

Old City Cemetery

Riverside Blvd. & Broadway

Sacramento

Leader: Maureen Geiger, 444-0804, mkgeiger@comcast.net

Join Maureen for an early morning walk in the cemetery to discover the common and perhaps uncommon resident and vagrant species. Goldfinches, kestrels, jays, crows, kinglets, hummingbirds and robins are just a few of the possible species you may see on this one to two hour walk through 28 acres of trees, shrubs and flowers. Meet Maureen at 7:30am on March 22 at the 10th Street gate in downtown Sacramento. Park across the street in the parking lot between 9th & 10th Streets on Broadway. This tour is offered in association with the Old City Cemetery Committee.



EDUCATION ANYONE?

The SAS is forming an Education Committee and you should be part of it! They will be discussing how to educate students and the general public not only about birds but also environmental issues important to everyone. The committee is hoping for a lot of input and a lot of great ideas have already been suggested. There are many places and age groups to reach out to. The time and place for the first meeting has yet to be decided but please contact Dan Tankersley at dtankers@winfirst.com for more information if you are interested.

**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.

WHAT IS A BOBELAINE BIRDATHON?

It is a fun way for birders to participate in raising funds for a conservation cause, specifically, habitat preservation. In our case, we raise funds for a year's worth of maintenance for Bobelaine Audubon Sanctuary, a 436 acre wildlife sanctuary in Sutter County, and part of the five percent or so of the remaining riparian forest left in the state. Without routine maintenance, the trails would be quickly consumed with Poison Oak and within two years would be totally overgrown and impassable with blackberries and wild grape. Birders are conservationists, they love all wildlife and birds in particular. Why not make this small, once a year additional effort to ask for pledges and be a part of the annual Bobelaine Birdathon to keep a beautiful area open to the public. April and May are the months in which to donate a day's worth of your birding time to a good local cause, the results of which you can see and touch.

Bobelaine Management

IT'S A SNOWY

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experts theorized that a crash of lemmings, the owls' favorite food source, was sending them southward in search of sustenance. The 1978 sighting in California was in Humboldt County and Joan believed that if the bird crossed into California it would probably be along the coast in Del Norte or Humboldt counties.

"This all shows that Solano County is really 'hot'," Joan said. In recent weeks, all in Solano, the Blue Jay, normally common in the Midwest and East, was recorded on the Benicia Christmas Count in Fairfield; a Northern Shrike, usually found north and east of the Central Valley, was found in Winters, and an Ovenbird, an eastern warbler, spent several weeks ground-feeding in brush along the bank of swollen Putah Creek at Mace Boulevard in Davis, to the delight of countless bird-listers. And now the Snowy Owl.

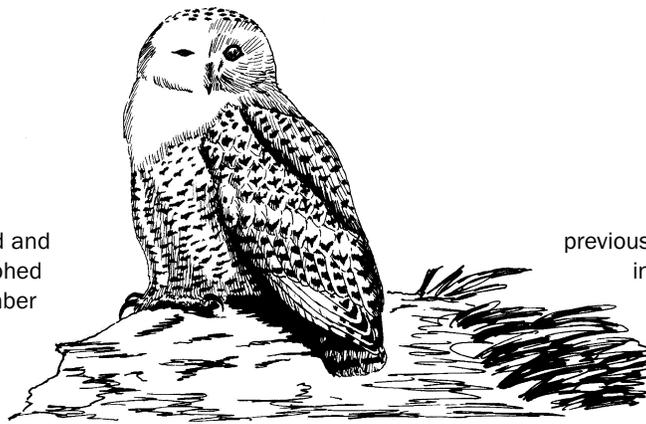
The Blue Jay was found by Margaret Barson and Barbara Barter, and the Northern Shrike by Jim White. The Ovenbird was

first found and photographed on November 5 by Jim Dunn. It went missing until

it was refound on December 15 by Claire Gallagher and Tobias Rohmer.

Chris Conard, who writes the "Seasonal Observations" column in *The Observer*, said that in order of rarity, the Blue Jay is first with 10 records, the Snowy Owl next. ("Snowy Owl gets credit for charisma," he says.) There are hundreds of Ovenbird records in the state but it was a first for the Sacramento area. The shrike is a regular seasonal visitor.

The southward movement of Snowy Owls is often attributed to lemming "crashes" at home, but experts mention other possible reasons including weather patterns and the



Stephen D'Amato

previous season's breeding success. Among off-course migratory species, Ed Harper, long time American River College Field Ornithology

instructor and Sacramento Audubon past president,

offered these observations:

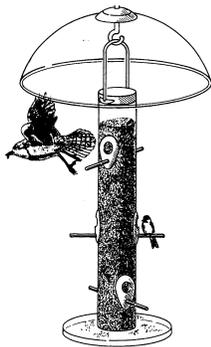
"Bird migration is obviously impacted by both weather and geography as reasons why some birds get lost. But another factor appears to be "Mirror image misorientation." For instance, an affected bird might fly 20 degrees west of south rather than 20 degrees east of south. And some species have been known to swap north for south in migration. Hence a Vermilion Flycatcher might end up in Montana as has happened, rather than in Mexico!"

Pete Hayes

SAS NEW MEMBERS

A big welcome to all of these new members:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Ginny Curtis | Charles Whitchurch |
| Marlo McClurg | Dee Warencia |
| Dana D. De Farcy | Rita Tiptoe |
| Mark C. Irish | Michelle Beachley |
| Carol Crespo | Clifton Rodes |
| Ann Barton | |
| Lisa and Brian Miller | |
| Tom Graham | |
| Barbara D. Hall | |
| Nancy A. Sporleder | |
| Loreen O'Hare-Hall | |
| John Serences | |
| Lisa Moraga | |
| Michael Laing | |
| Larry and Linda Gage | |



Stephen D'Amato

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS

Thanks to the following for their generous donations:

- Maria Nicholas Kelly for a donation to Habitat 2020
- Kate Chabarek and Felix Arsuaga for a donation in honor of the wedding of J.R. Flanders and Molly Church
- Alexander Kilner, Wayne Monson, Dorothy Tribbett, Dena Wagner, Tim Fitzer, Peggy Gerick, for donations to the Conservation and Education Fund
- Wayne Monson, Dorothy Tribbett, Peter Stoddard, Leonard Marowitz, Michael Corlew, Carol Edwards, for donations to the Bobelaine Sanctuary
- J.B. Hervey, Julian Lacalle, Marc Irish, Marlo McClurg, for donations to the General Fund

WHO'S THE SMARTEST CHICKADEE?

The one that marks their calendar now for Thursday March 16th. That's because, back by popular demand, Jessica Griffith of Ventana Wildlife Society of Big Sur will be speaking on the Spring Migration of the Chickadee.

Sacramento Audubon Chapter Board Meetings

Board Meetings of the Sacramento Audubon Society are held the last Tuesday of the month. The next meeting will be February 28, 2006 at 7pm at the SMUD Building, 6301 S Street, Sacramento.

Seasonal Observations

Continued from page 8

One and possibly two **Red Phalaropes** were found in the extreme southwestern Delta portion of Sacramento County on 12/28. This was in a season where thousands of the typically pelagic species have been reported on the coast—some in very poor condition. Other interesting reports include an immature **Northern Goshawk** from Rattlesnake Bar Rd on the way to the Peninsula portion of Folsom Lake SRA. The Flannery/Robinson Rd area of Solano County south of Dixon produced regular reports of up to 200 **Mountain Plovers** and excellent raptors. This was one of the only sites this season where **Rough-legged Hawks** were reported. To the north of the area typically covered here, a group of five **Trumpeter Swans**, two adults and three juveniles, was found on 12/23 at the Esquon Ranch south of Chico. At least one adult and the three juveniles were reported through press time.

Thanks to the following for their reports (the majority were taken from http://groups.yahoo.com/group/central_valley_birds/)

- Roger Adamson, Brent Campos, Mary Chambers, Tony Chappelle, Les Chibana, Daryl Coldren, Paul Cordero, Matthew Dodder, Andrew Engilis, Gil Ewing, Maureen Geiger, Brian Gilmore, Kevin Guse, Richard Hall, David Hamilton, Denise Hamilton, Steve Hampton, Cliff Hawley, Joan Humphrey, Cheryl Johnson, Dave Johnson, Jon Katz, Dan Copp, Jeri Langham, Sami LaRocca, Jim Lomax, Neil Losin, Laura Look, Ron Melcer, Ed Pandolfino, Chris Pechal, Michael Perrone, Deren Ross, Jim Rowoth, Mary Schiedt, Stefan Schlick, John Sterling, Craig Swolgaard, Gene Trapp, John Trochet, Patrick Toomey, Bruce Webb, Neil Whiting, and Dan Williams.

Chris Conard

JOIN THE SACRAMENTO AUDUBON SOCIETY

The membership fee is \$25, all of which goes to Sacramento Audubon Society. Also please send any questions regarding your membership to our new Membership Chairperson, Lea Landry in an e-mail to llandry@softcom.net. Note "SAS Membership" in the Subject. Don't forget Lea is going to start including the month your SAS membership expires on *The Observer* address.

Sacramento Audubon Society Membership Form

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

City _____ ZIP _____

E-mail _____

Is this a Gift Memberhsip? _____ Total Payment \$ _____

Are you interested in volunteering? YES/NO _____

If yes, any particular areas of interest _____

Comments _____

Return this form and your check made out to Sacramento Audubon Society to:

Lea Landry, 11054 Autumnwind Lane
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

Seasonal Observations

December 1 to December 31
Rare and Unusual Bird Reports
783-2331

In addition to the birds found on the many local Christmas Bird Counts (starting on page 2), this December was characterized by the continuing presence of excellent rarities that were first found in November. Some of these continued through press time and were seen by dozens of observers. The **Harlequin Duck**, first found at the Stockton Sewage Ponds on 11/20, was reported through at least 12/13.

The **Ovenbird** found on 11/5 along Putah Creek near Mace Blvd in Yolo County was relocated on 12/15. It continued through press time, mostly on the Solano County side of the bridge. The **Mountain Chickadee** found at Slide Hill Park in Davis on 11/23



Daniel Kilby

remained through press time along with a **Western Tanager** and several **Red-breasted Nuthatches**. The **Snowy Plover**, first reported on 11/11, continued at the Davis WTP through at least 12/14.

A survey of the Howard Ranch on 12/6, private property in southeastern Sacramento County, produced an adult **Northern Shrike**, a **Vesper Sparrow**, two **Lawrence's Goldfinches**, in addition to three **Burrowing Owls**. Highlights from the Cosumnes River

Preserve (CRP) include consistent reports of one to two calling **Least Bitterns** through press time and excellent views of a **Yellow-shafted Flicker** on 12/2. Perhaps the most intriguing bird of the month was reported on 12/24 as a probable **Yellow Rail** seen briefly as it flew across the road at the CRP Barn Ponds and ran into the vegetation.

The **Red-naped Sapsucker** reported at the American River Parkway's (ARP) Goethe Park on 11/30 continued sporadically through press time. Other excellent ARP reports include a female **Red-breasted Merganser** near the Nimbus Hatchery from 12/10 to 12/12. A gorgeous male **Red-breasted Merganser** was first reported on 12/15 from the same area and continued through press time. A **Western Tanager** was found wintering near Howe Ave. There were an impressive number of **White-throated Sparrow** reports, especially from ARP, and **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** were reported widely, with daily reports approaching ten individuals from sites such as ARP, CRP, and Stone Lakes NWR. A **Common Poorwill** was an interesting seasonal find on 12/7 in Sacramento near Watt and El Camino.

An **Eastern Phoebe** was found near the Mace Blvd bridge at Putah Creek on 12/8 and was reported through 12/11. What may have been the same **Swamp Sparrow** first found at the Cache Creek Settling Basin on 11/4 was reported on 12/10 and 12/14 from a slightly different location. A **Rusty Blackbird** was an excellent report along Rd 104 south of Davis on 12/11.

Observations continued on page 7

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