



The OBSERVER

Sacramento Audubon Society

General Meeting

Thursday, February 19

Shepard Garden and Art Center
7pm General Meeting

Sacramento Wildlife Care

The Sacramento Wildlife Care Association (WCA) is a volunteer-based, non-profit organization that rehabilitates injured, orphaned and sick wild animals. They work under permits from the California Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Concerned citizens and other agencies bring WCA over 6,000 sick, orphaned, and injured animals each year. With the help of volunteers, staff, and local vets, WCA provides medical services to these animals. Once the animals have recovered from their injuries or illness, or have grown and learned to hunt and fend for themselves, they are released into the wild, giving them a second chance at life.

At our General Meeting, you will be able to meet some of the WCA Ambassador Animals and hear their stories. The speakers include Debbie DuVall, a member of the WCA Board of Directors, who specializes in mammals and birds of prey; Linda Davidson, a licensed Animal Health Technician who assists with WCA's sick and injured wildlife and whose specialty is reptiles and insects; and Doug Forbes, currently the Vice-President of WCA, who specializes in Corvids.

WCA can always use donations, which they will accept at the General Meeting. There is a complete list of needed items on page 6.

Sacramento Audubon meetings are held the third Thursday of the month at the Shepard Garden and Art Center in McKinley Park. The public is welcome. Visit our website www.sacramentoaudubon.org and click on Society Info/Meetings, for further information, including a map and directions.

Lea Landry, Program Chair

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT 2009

Don't forget that this month is the Great Backyard Bird Count. Led by Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology the count takes place during "Presidents' Day" weekend, February 13-16. Anyone can count birds from wherever they are and enter their tallies online at www.birdcount.org. These reports create an exciting real-time picture of where the birds are across the continent and contribute valuable information for science and conservation. Taking part in the GBBC is a great way to take a mid-winter nature break. AND it gives scientists important information about birds and our environment. Each year we see changes in where the birds are based on factors including climate changes, weather patterns, food supplies, diseases, and breeding success.

Anyone, of any age or experience level can take part. All you do is count the highest number of each species you see during at least 15 minutes on one or more of the count days. Enter the tallies on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site www.birdcount.org. The web site has some helpful hints for identifying birds if you need it. If you know children that you're trying to interest follow the link 'GBBC For Kids' There you'll find Puzzles, a Coloring Page that you can print out, Bird Facts from last year's count and an encouraging How To that explains how simple counting can be. You can compare results from Sacramento with other towns and cities throughout California or the United States, as checklists pour in. There are also wonderful photos taken by participants so why not think about sending in some of your own?

Great Backyard Bird Count Field Trips

Thanks to the SAS Field Trip Committee we also have beginning birders Field Trips planned for the GBBC weekend. Come out and sharpen your bird watching skills.

Friday, February 13 8am till noon, Yolo Basin Wildlife Area
Leader: Dan Tankersley, 359-2829, dtankers@winfirst.com.

Friday, February 13 8am, Riverbend Park (formerly Goethe Park)
Leader: Cathie LaZier, 457-6882, empid@earthlink.net.
There is a \$5 entrance fee to the park

Saturday, February 14 9am Sutter's Landing Park
Leaders: Julie Serences and Robert Sewell. Meet Julie and Robert at the parking lot nearest the skateboard building. Sutter's Landing Park is located at the end of 28th Street behind the B Street Theater and over the railroad tracks!
This is a riparian stretch of river cherished by the local neighbors as a place for family nature outings. With luck, a peregrine falcon may be a visitor during our count. Children welcome. No fee.

Sunday, February 15 8:30am, Mather Regional Park,
Leader: Wayne Blunk, 876-0457, wayneblunk@att.net.
There is a \$5 entrance fee to the park.

Field Trip Findings

Salt Springs Valley (1/12) — Leader Tim Fitzer reported that birders had a wind-free day, mild temperatures and a solid 73 species at this Western Calaveras County site. Highlights included 1 Bald Eagle, 8 Ferruginous Hawks, 1 Rough-legged Hawk (dark morph), 2 Prairie Falcons, 1 Burrowing Owl, 1 Eurasian Wigeon, and 2 Phainopeplas.

Sacramento National Wildlife Area (1/10) — Leader Dan Williams reported: “Weather was stellar — clear skies, little wind, and spring-like temperatures. The waterfowl show was outstanding and everyone got scope-filling views of Greater White-fronted, Ross’s, and Snow Geese (including a few Blue Snows), as well as Cinnamon and Green-winged Teal, Bufflehead, and many other duck species. Bald Eagles were sighted, but unfortunately they never came in close enough to get very good views of them. We did however get terrific views of an adult Peregrine Falcon, and at the end of the trip an American Bittern put on quite a show at close range.”

River Bend Park (Formerly Goethe Park) (1/5) — Leader Jack Hiehle reported that despite the rain his five-member group found a Bald Eagle and Barrow’s Goldeneye, both spotted by Cathie LaZier. Other American River Parkway sightings included Greater Yellowlegs, Junco, Lark Sparrow and Western Bluebird.

Bobelaine Audubon Sanctuary (1/1) — Leader Brian Gilmore reported that on a foggy, overcast New Year’s day, eight participants observed a Cooper’s Hawk with a bird kill, more than 1,000 American Robins, and fly-overs by a couple of skeins of White-faced Ibises, plus Snow Geese and Tundra Swans. Also, Northern Flickers,



Nuttall’s and Acorn woodpeckers, sparrows and warblers, Great Egrets and Pied-bill Grebes on Crandall Lake.

Western Placer County (12/28) — Leader Scott Hoppe reported: “Six of us enjoyed mild weather and tallied 85 species, including 11 species of raptors (12 if you include Turkey Vulture). Among the highlights were a Bald Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, 2 Ferruginous Hawks, 2 Merlin and 2 Prairie Falcons. Other highlights included, Cackling Goose, Lewis’s Woodpecker, a Varied Thrush (found by Mark Martucci) and a Great-tailed Grackle. Also of interest, and very out of place, was a single Mute Swan in with a flock of 50-60 Tundra Swans. One field

near the intersection of Waltz and Brewer Roads was crowded with hundreds of Snow, Ross’s and White-fronted Geese, as well as more Tundra Swans.

“One great spot was along Sunset Blvd, about a mile west of Fiddymt Rd. There was a large area of recently plowed fields where we saw thousands of Horned Larks. And within about 15 minutes we saw the Rough-legged Hawk, Merlin, Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Harrier and White-tailed Kite. Needless to say, with all of these raptors around, the Horned Larks were somewhat nervous and kept flying back and forth in huge clouds of birds. All in all, a very enjoyable day.”

River Bend Park (12/21) — Leader Cathie LaZier reported: “This was a rainy day, but Marilyn Armbruster and Mark Martucci joined me and we still managed to find 37 species. We sorted through large mixed flocks of sparrows, finches, juncos and towhees, ending up with six sparrow species. Red-shouldered and Cooper’s hawks were out in the rain, and we also found a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.”

Pete Hayes

2008-2009 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS BY AREA

SACRAMENTO

December 27 — Compiler Mark Cudney reported, “The Sacramento Christmas Count results are in! 162 species—one shy of the all-time record set last year. This is one of the highest inland count totals in the country. Weather was clear in the morning—partly cloudy in the afternoon. ‘You gotta be kidding birds’ included single individual Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Vaux Swift, Iceland Gull, Western Gull, Marbled Godwit, and Red-breasted Merganser.

Birds seldom seen previously included Blue-winged Teal (20), Horned Grebe (1), Bald and Golden Eagle (1 each), Peregrine Falcon (6), Pacific Golden Plover (1), Hutton’s Vireo (1), Brown Creeper (2), Violet-green Swallow (2), Golden-crowned Kinglet (5), Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher (1), Black-throated Gray Warbler (1),

Townsend’s Warbler (1), Purple Finch (1), and Pine Siskin (22).

Big misses included Ring-necked Duck and Spotted Sandpiper (ugh), Ferruginous Hawk, Osprey, Western Screech-Owl, and Phainopepla. An excellent job by all who participated.”

FOLSOM

January 4 — Compiler Chris Conard reported, “We had a very successful Folsom CBC, with near-perfect weather—okay, it was a little cold, but this is winter, after all. The 70+ participants tallied a preliminary new record of 147 species (143 last year tied the previous high). The following is tentative, without a careful review of all of the data sheets.

“Notable reports included six Cackling Geese, one Green-winged Teal (easy to miss

on this count), one Cinnamon Teal (easy to miss), one Black-crowned Night-Heron (easy to miss), both eagles, Ferruginous Hawk, four Rough-legged Hawks, Peregrine Falcon (reported by three parties—used to be tough to find on this count), 15,000 gulls (down from 70,000 last year) including one Mew Gull, 20+ Thayer’s, one adult Western Gull at Folsom Point, one first cycle Glaucous Gull at Beals Point, one Band-tailed Pigeon at Folsom Lake Peninsula (the first since 1994), one Western Screech-Owl, three Burrowing Owls, moderate numbers of Lewis’s Woodpeckers (Scott Rd and private property, a few elsewhere), several Hairy Woodpeckers, two Steller’s Jays (one at Folsom Lake Peninsula, and one along the west side of Lake Natoma), Yellow-billed Magpie (apparently up slightly), two Common Ravens (amazingly, only the third count record), Tree Swallow, Barn

Swallow, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Canyon Wren (Bee's Bight–9th count record and the first in several years), Golden-crowned Kinglet (one near Cameron Park), Varied Thrush, California Thrasher, two Common Yellowthroats (easy to miss—only the 6th or 7th count record), two Slate-colored Juncos, Tricolored Blackbird, Purple Finch, Red Crossbills (Folsom), Pine Siskin (fewer than 10), and five Lawrence's Goldfinches (Sweetwater Creek area).

“Notable misses are relatively few—hence the good count total: both white geese, Tundra Swan (reported count week), Ring-necked Pheasant, Pacific Loon, American Bittern, Brown Creeper, American Dipper, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Mountain Bluebird, Vesper Sparrow, and White-throated Sparrow.”

“Thanks to all who participated, with extra thanks to the area leaders and sub-area leaders. Each year our coverage gets a little better, and without your help, this wouldn't be possible.”

LINCOLN

December 30 – Compiler Ed Pandolfino reported, “Sixty-three participants braved thick morning fog to complete the seventh Lincoln Christmas Bird Count. We tallied 138 species, our second-highest total and counted over 120,000 individuals, also our second highest total. Although the numbers of waterfowl were down (geese in particular), we more than made up for that with blackbirds. We counted over 60,000 total blackbirds with Brewer's accounting for over 26,000 and Red-wings another 18,000+. Most of these were associated with dairy operations southwest of Lincoln. These same dairy farms accounted for our new record number of European Starlings—over 9,000.

“Our total of 10 Varied Thrushes was a new high count for Lincoln as was the 1700+ Mourning Dove total. Bucking the trend for other waterfowl, we set a new high for Northern Pintails with well over 6,000 in the flooded rice fields west of Lincoln.

“Of continuing concern, we tallied only 50 Yellow-billed Magpies, a new low. Prior to the West Nile Virus outbreak in summer of 2005, the Lincoln CBC averaged 645 Yellow-billed Magpies. Since that year our average has been 149. Likewise, Loggerhead Shrikes totals averaged 39 before 2005 and less than 9 since.

“Best birds were Eurasian Wigeon (2nd time), Barrow's Goldeneye (2nd time),

Steller's Jay (1st time), Chestnut-collared Longspur (3rd time) and Pine Siskin (1st time). Finding all three subspecies of Merlin was a particular treat.

“On a somber note, we missed Burrowing Owl for the first time. We have never managed more than one, and never at the same location twice. This bird seems to be well on its way to extirpation from Placer County, an all-too-familiar trend in California.”

WOODFORDS

December 20 – Dan Brown reported that 23 observers participated in this Sacramento

Audubon Christmas count in Alpine County, CA and Douglas County, NV in the Sierra. He said, “The preliminary species total for the count was 79 species. (The '07 total was 76, '06 total was 85, '05 was 84 and '04 was 83.)



Stephen D'Amato

Count-wide Highlights: 7 Bald Eagles, 38 Red-tailed Hawks, 8 Rough-legged Hawks, 7 White-headed Woodpeckers, 51 Clark's Nutcrackers, 84 Black-billed Magpies, 14 Townsend's Solitaires, 42 Pygmy Nuthatches, 125 Pine Siskins, 170 Cassin's Finches, and 112 Spotted Towhees.

“Highlights by area: #1 – 16 Red Crossbills; #2 – We added one species to the over-all checklist - Fox Sparrow from area #2. Also in area #2 were 1 Pinyon Jay and 1 Williamson's Sapsucker; #3 – 1 Merlin and 582 Tundra Swans; #4 – 6 Townsend's Solitaires; #5 – 1 Pine Grosbeak and #6 – 2 Varied Thrush (Markleyville) and 2 Marsh Wrens (Grover Hot Springs).

“Lowlights: We missed Northern Goshawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Red-breasted and Red-naped Sapsuckers, Cedar Waxwing, Mountain Bluebird, Northern Mockingbird, Evening Grosbeak and NO species of Owl were reported! The weather was great—clear and still, temperatures started at 25 and ended up at 42.

Thanks to all who participated in the count, and Happy Holidays to all.”

BENICIA-NAPA

December 15 – Compiler Robin Leong reported that incomplete results showed that, “in spite of rain in the morning and hail in the late afternoon, we had 173 species with at least one count period bird. This is the best that we have ever done. Best species appear to be Long-tailed Duck, White-winged Scoter, Pelagic Cormorant and Townsend's Solitaire. We had 69,000 birds, about on a par with other counts. Number of counters was 93, the most ever.”

PUTAH CREEK

December 14 – Compiler Steve Hampton reported, “Taking advantage of one of the brightest moons in 15 years, the 2008 Putah Creek Christmas Bird Count got off to a cold but clear start, with owls calling everywhere. Alas, the weather didn't hold, and a cold rain came to dominate the afternoon. Temperatures never climbed above 45 degrees. Snow fell on birders on Blue Ridge. Nevertheless, we had an excellent turnout, with 76 participants. We logged 164 party hours and traveled 75 miles on foot, 289 miles by car, 14 miles by boat or canoe, and a record 16 miles by bike.

“We found 142 species, just one less than last year despite the rain. We added two new species to the count, Cackling Goose and Western Sandpiper, and one new hybrid, Bufflehead x Common Goldeneye. Record high counts were set for 6 species: California Quail, Eurasian Collared-Dove (jumping from 2 to 31 individuals), Acorn Woodpecker (for the second year in a row), Tree Swallow, Chestnut-backed Chickadee (with a whopping 58), and Northern Mockingbird. We also had 2nd-ever count records for three interesting subspecies: ‘Harlan's’ Red-tailed Hawk, ‘Red’ Fox Sparrow, and ‘Pink-sided’ Junco. The Harlan's was a very rare light phase individual and became one of the only ones ever photographed in the state.

“The only record low count was for Loggerhead Shrike. In addition to the shrike, two other species suspected of being impacted by West Nile Virus, Yellow-billed Magpie and Oak Titmouse, continued to post very low numbers.

“Thanks to all the area leaders, potluck organizers, and others who helped make this a great CBC.”

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 or she cannot be reached, call the scheduler Tim Fitzer, 870-5207, spskua2@comcast.net, for the trip on February 1st. For trips from February 7th through March 8th, call the scheduler Richard Barbieri, 966-4603, offleash6@yahoo.com. For trips after March 9th, call the scheduler Mark Martucci, 833-6722, matuchbirdman@yahoo.com

Consider car pooling and share gas expenses with the driver. FRS radios can be helpful on all 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.



Stephen D'Amato

Sunday, February 1, 7:30am

Rush and King Ranches, Solano County

Leaders: Maureen Geiger, 444-0804
mkgeiger@sbcglobal.net
Ken Poerner, 707-580-6277
ken@solanolandtrust.org

This trip to Solano County will begin with Rush Ranch, an operating cattle ranch on beautiful Suisun Marsh. Maureen and Ken will introduce us to the birds of Rush Ranch and then head to the King Ranch, another Solano Land Trust property high above Hwy 680. This site has a spectacular view of the surrounding area and is good for Golden Eagles and other raptors as well as Burrowing Owls and Say's Phoebes. Bring lunch and liquids, and be prepared for possible muddy conditions. Meet at the Park and Ride in West Sacramento. From I-80, take the West Sacramento Exit; turn left at the light; then left again into the lot. This trip will last to mid-afternoon. If interested, there will be an optional hike up a short, steep slope to see endangered Red-legged Frogs at the King Ranch.

Saturday, February 7, Sunset Trip

2 pm – dark

Sandhill Cranes and Other Wintering Birds of the Sacramento Valley

A "Save Our Sandhill Cranes"

sponsored trip

Co-coordinator: Mike Savino

446-1392, yogoombah@yahoo.com

Sandhill Cranes are the focus of this trip, but the experienced birding leaders will also help you identify the waterfowl and shorebirds that winter here. Ducks, swans and geese, as well as shorebirds, feed in the flooded fields and marshy areas of the delta, and hawks patrol overhead. Meet at the Cosumnes River Preserve Visitor Center parking lot, at 2pm, where we will stroll the boardwalk in the Lost Slough

Wetlands, looking at ducks and shorebirds, then drive out to areas such as Desmond Road, Woodbridge Road or Staten Island Road, for cranes, swans and geese. Watching the cranes congregate in a roosting area for the evening is always a wonderful sight. Dress for changeable weather; bring scopes and FRS radios if you have them. From Sacramento, take I-5 south to Twin Cities Road, (exit 498); go left (east) to the stop sign at Franklin Blvd; turn right (south) on Franklin and, driving through the preserve, watch for the visitor center parking lot on your left. Further directions and maps are available at www.cosumnes.org. This is a great trip for beginners.

Sunday, February 8, 7:30am

Yuba County Wetlands

Leader: Richard Barbieri, 966-4603
offleash56@yahoo.com

Streams and sloughs draining from the foothills to the valley rivers make this wetland and the surrounding properties one of Richard's favorite places to bird. He'll be looking for ducks, geese, shorebirds, and small passerines. Meet Richard at the Brookfield's Restaurant parking lot, 1817 Taylor Road, in Roseville. From Sacramento on I-80, take the Eureka Road exit (105A) and follow straight through the first stop light at Eureka Road and you'll be on Taylor Road. Brookfield's will be on your left behind the Shell gas station. Bring lunch, layered clothes, and scopes and FRS radios if you have them.

Wednesday, February 11, 8am – noon

Jacob Lane area, American River Parkway

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. Meet Jack at the end of Jacob Lane, which runs south

off Fair Oaks Blvd, between Arden and Eastern.

February, 14, 15 and 16 President's Day Weekend

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 for further details.

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT FIELD TRIPS

Friday, February 13, 8am – noon

Yolo Basin Wildlife Area

Leader: Dan Tankersley, 359-2829
dtankers@winfirst.com

Friday, February 13, 8am

Riverbend Park (formerly Goethe Park)

Leader: Cathie LaZier, 457-6882
empid@earthlink.net

Sunday, February 15, 8:30am

Mather Regional Park

Leader: Wayne Blunk, 876-0457
wayneblunk@att.net

Sunday, February 15

Habitat Improvement Work Day

Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777

Help Jack restore native vegetation along the American River Parkway. Tasks vary from month to month, so call Jack for details and meeting time, usually early morning.

Saturday, February 21, 7:30am

Lake Solano/Putah Creek

**Leader: Dan Williams, (714) 943-1266
jaegermaestro@yahoo.com**

Solano Lake is a great place to look for ducks this time of year and Putah Creek is one of the most reliable areas to find Hooded Mergansers. Other possible species include Purple Finch, Common Merganser, Barrow's Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Hairy Woodpecker, Phainopepla, and possibly Pileated Woodpecker. It could be muddy so wear appropriate footwear. There is a \$5 parking fee at the Lake Solano area. Meet Dan at the Park and Ride off I-80 in West Sacramento. From Sacramento, take the West Capitol Ave Exit #81; turn left at the light and then left again into the Park and Ride lot, on the north side of the freeway. This trip will last into early afternoon, so bring a lunch and liquids. Scopes will also be helpful.

**Sunday, February 22, 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. Past trips have found Golden-crowned Kinglet, Black-throated Gray Warbler and Red-breasted Sapsucker, as well as the more common birds. This trip is perfect for beginning birders. Meet Mary Beth at the cemetery gate at the intersection of 43rd Street and Folsom Blvd. Park on 43rd Street. This walk will last for 2-3 hours.

**Tuesday, February 24, 8am - noon
Estates Drive area,
American River Parkway**

Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777

This morning walk along the river will be in an area just upstream 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. Meet Jack at the end of Estates Drive, which runs south off Fair Oaks Blvd, between Watt and Eastern Avenues.

**Saturday, February 28, 8am - 12pm
Bufferlands Wetlands and
Waterfowl Tour**

**Leader: Kevin Cassady, 875-9196
cassadyk@sacsewer.com**

Tour a managed seasonal and permanent wetland area 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 water-

fowl, 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.

**Sunday, March 1, 7am
Schollenberger Park and Petaluma
Adobe State Park**

**Leader: Mark Martucci, 833-6722
matuchbirdman@yahoo.com**

From the West Sacramento Park and Ride, Mark will lead the group towards Petaluma, with possible birding stops along Hwy 37. At Petaluma Adobe State Park he'll search the fields, bushes and trees for a variety of passerine birds. Possibilities are Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Hutton's Vireo, among others. Moving on to Schollenberger, he'll look for Blue-winged Teal, a variety of shorebirds, Common Yellowthroat and the occasional rail. Bring lunch and liquids and layered clothing. There is a minimal per person fee at Petaluma Adobe. Meet Mark at 7am at the Park and Ride off I-80 in West Sacramento. From Sacramento, take the West Capitol Ave Exit #81; turn left at the light and then left again into the Park and Ride lot, on the north side of the freeway. This is a great trip for both beginning and more experienced birders.

**Wednesday, March 4, 8am
Yolo Wildlife Area**

**Leader: Marlene Ishihara, 635-9758
IshIM2000@comcast.net**

Join Marlene in this great area 10 minutes from downtown Sacramento. She'll be looking for shorebirds and waterfowl and possible raptors such as Peregrine Falcon. From Sacramento, take I-80 west, take the first exit (#78) at the west end of the Yolo Causeway. Turn right at the stop sign, go under the freeway, make a left up onto the levee, then drop down into the Wildlife Area. The trip begins at the first parking lot (Lot A), on your left. Scopes are helpful on this trip which is good for both beginners and more experienced birders.

**Saturday, March 7, 8am
Bushy Lake**

**Leader: Dan Brown, 362-2458
naturestoc@aol.com**

Join Dan for a look at some of the birds that live along this section of the American River Parkway. This will be about a 2 to 3 mile hike and will end before lunch. Bring

water and appropriate footwear. Meet in the parking lot of the cul-de-sac at the south end of Ethan Way, located just south of here Hurley Way goes into Gate 12 of Cal Expo.

**Sunday, March 8, 8am - noon
Note: Daylight Savings Time
begins today.**

**Upper Lake Natoma and Folsom Lake
Chris Conard, 362-5942
conardc@gmail.com**

Be prepared for up to four miles of walking along rolling trails at the upper end of Lake Natoma in Folsom and Mormon Island at Folsom Lake. These sites have proven to be productive during the Folsom CBC. Mormon Island to Brown's Ravine is one of the best sites in the area for Phainopeplas, in addition to more common foothills species. On the lake, we'll look for loons, grebes and other waterbirds. The woods should be alive with the songs of Bewick's Wrens and other resident breeders. From Hwy 50, exit at Folsom Blvd and go north. Make the first right at Iron Point, then a right into the parking lot. Meet across from the Folsom Outlets in the parking lot behind Burger King near the Circle K on Iron Point Road. Steady rain cancels.

**Tuesday, March 10, 8am
Riverbend Park**

**Leader: Cathie LaZier, 457-6882
empid@earthlink.net**

Meet Cathie in the first parking lot on your right just past the park entrance. We'll look for early nesting birds and a few early wildflowers, as well as lingering winter birds. This walk will end by noon and is excellent for beginners. There is a \$5 park entrance fee.

**Saturday, March 14
ARNHA Bird and Breakfast
Fund Raiser
Effie Yeaw Nature Center
489-4918**

Join Sacramento Audubon leaders for a birding walk followed by a delicious breakfast. This fund raiser for the American River Natural History Association is an annual event, and the leaders usually find nesting Anna's Hummingbirds and Bushtits. Various woodpeckers and other small woodland birds, as well as herons, egrets and waterfowl on the river, will also be seen. Red-shouldered Hawks are frequently found in the oak woodland. This fund raiser supports ARNHA's educational work. For sign-

Field Trips continued on page 6

Birding and Local Events

“HOW TO BIRD” CLASS STARTS THIS MONTH

As announced in previous issues of *The Observer*, local birder and SAS field trip leader, Maureen Geiger, is teaching a birdwatching class through Learning Exchange. So if you are a beginning birder or know anyone who is, here's a class that covers all the basics of how to be a birdwatcher. Topics include: finding birds and other birders, increasing observational skills, dressing for success, birding by habitat and season, field trips and bird festivals, choosing optics, birder's code of ethics, and keeping notes and records. The class is offered at the Learning Exchange on Howe Avenue, February 25 and March 4 from 7-8:30pm followed by a field trip on Saturday, March 7th. As of press time there were still spaces available. Contact Maureen at 444-0804 or the Learning Exchange at 929-9200 for more information. The Learning Exchange web address is www.learningexchange.com.

BIRD AND BREAKFAST AT EFFIE YEAW

The Bird and Breakfast, Saturday, March 14th, is an Annual Spring Classic at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. Is that a dirty sock hanging in that tree? No, it's a bushtit nest! And that tiny cup the size of a quarter, built with lichen and spider webs? A hummingbird nest! Explore the miracles of spring in the beautiful oak woodland and meadows of the Effie Yeaw Nature Area, in small groups guided by Audubon experts. Return to a hot, hearty breakfast (vegetarian option available) served in the new Assembly Building at the Nature Center in Ancil Hoffman Park, California Ave. and Tarshes Drive in Carmichael.

Participants (not advised for children under 12) should wear comfortable walking shoes and bring binoculars. On this walk one can expect to see some 30 bird species among more than 100 that populate the lower American River's environs.

Sign-ups start in mid-January. Reservations are always necessary for the space-limited, \$30 per person fund-raiser for educational programs on the American River Parkway. Call the center at 489-4918 for details. Checks payable to ARNHA may be mailed to P.O. Box 241, Carmichael, CA 95609. Be sure to include your telephone number.

OLYMPIC BIRDFEST 2009

Bird with the folks in Sequim, Washington, April 3-5. Grab your binoculars and join the Olympic BirdFest celebration at the Dungeness River Audubon Center. The stage is set... quiet bays and estuaries, sandy beaches, a five-mile-long sand spit, and a protected island bird sanctuary on the Strait of Juan de Fuca; wetlands, tide pools, rainforests, and lush river valleys. The players are ready... Marbled Murrelets, Rhinoceros Auklets, Harlequin Ducks, Black Oystercatchers, Peregrine Falcons, and Pygmy owls will be sporting their finest spring plumage for this celebration. Enjoy guided birding trips, boat tours; and a traditional salmon bake at the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal Center. Also this year! Follow your BirdFest weekend with a three-day, two night birding cruise of the spectacular San Juan Islands on April 5-7. Visit San Juan and Sucia Islands, and stay at the historic Roche Harbor Resort. Check out the offerings by going online at www.olympicbirdfest.org, or calling for a brochure. You can contact them by phone, at (360) 681-4076.

DRAWING CLASS WITH JACK LAWS

Don't forget to mark your calendars for an all day drawing class with Jack Muir Laws at Effie Yeaw on April 16. The cost will be \$125 (for SAS members) and will be quick to fill. So if you are interested please contact Julie Serences at education@sacramentoaudubon.org for further information and pre-registration.

Field Trips continued from page 5
up information phone the Nature Center at 489-4918.

Sunday, March 15, 8am
Effie Yeaw Nature Center
Leader: Cathie LaZier, 457-6882
empid@earthlink.net

This area of the parkway is excellent for birding and Cathie will be looking for early nesting birds and returning migrants, as well as blooming wildflowers. This is a very good trip for beginners, as well as more experienced birders. Meet in the Nature Center parking lot in Ancil Hoffman Park in Fair Oaks. The trip will end by noon.

DONATIONS FOR WILDLIFE CARE

Items for donation to the Sacramento wildlife Care Association include: Cash donations, Purina Pro Plan Total Care Dry food for Kitten (Chicken and rice formula); Unscented paper towels; Laundry detergent; Unscented toilet paper; Bleach; Unscented tissues; Kleenex boxes (can be empty); Large and small dog size animal bowls (steel, crock or hard plastic); Pet carriers; New heating pads Animal cage water bottles; Gift cards to Kinko's; Wal-Mart; or pet stores. Walnuts, Hazelnuts, and/or Almonds (unsalted and in the shell); Flannel pajamas (any size); Pillow cases (especially flannel); 100% cotton diapers; Baby receiving blankets; Cotton Balls (100% cotton); Plastic storage containers; 16 quart plastic Sterilite tubs with lids (see through); and Rectangular Laundry Baskets



Nala,
Animal Ambassador

SUCCESSFUL OUTREACH

Birding Quiz Photos were the big hit of Sacramento Audubon's Outreach display at the 2nd annual Galt Winter Bird Festival on January 17th. Designed by Jan Tankersley for children, (and interested adults), questions about common birds are answered by flipping the page to find a large color photo of the bird in question. Photos were donated by Dan Brown, Chris Conard, Ed Harper, and Dan and Jan Tankersley. Outreach volunteers at this event were Tim Fitzer, Gail Janke, Cathie LaZier and Darrell Mohr. If you're available to work at an Outreach event once or twice a year, contact Cathie at 457-6882 or empid@earthlink.net. Spring is a busy time and we hope to be present at several Earth Day events, Creek Week, Walk on the Wildside, Migratory Bird Day at the City Zoo, and more, but we need active volunteers to help.

VAUX'S SWIFTS' CHILDREN'S BOOK

A recently published children's book, *Swifty's Big Flight*, is the story of a young Vaux's Swift heading south for the winter. The book lightly weaves details about Vaux's Swifts into the fictional, family-oriented narrative, and children of all ages will enjoy the bold black-and-white illustrations. Ornithological facts about Vaux's Swifts are at the back of the book. *Swifty's Big Flight* (soft cover, 32 pages, \$7.95) is by Portland, Oregon author, Lee Jackson, and proceeds benefit the Audubon Society of Portland's Swift Watch program. An ornithologist at the Audubon Society of Portland reviewed the text and illustrations in *Swifty's Big Flight* and the society is now selling the book in its Nature Store. More information including pictures, reviews and purchase information can be found at www.flyingswift.blogspot.com.

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 held on February 24, at 7pm at the SMUD Building, 6301 S Street, Sacramento.

Learn About the Birds and Bees

If you want to learn about the birds and bees, here's your chance. A free workshop on attracting native bees, and with them birds and butterflies, will be held at the South Natomas Community Center on Saturday, March 21.

Native bees are loners, and don't sting. They feed on drought-resistant native plants that also attract birds and butterflies. And many of the more than 1600 species in California are quite beautiful. With honeybee populations weakened by disease, farmers are showing increased interest in encouraging native bees as pollinators for their crops. But home gardeners can also profit by creating habitat for native bees and other beneficial insects. A yard planted with native plants will attract birds, butterflies, and interesting insects year-round, while most non-native plants attract them for only a short time.

Sponsored jointly by the local chapters of the Audubon and Native Plant societies as "The Smart Gardening Program," the presentation will feature experts on the native bees that live in this area and the plants that attract them. The two-hour program will begin at 1pm in the Conference Room of the South Natomas Community Center, 2921 Truxel Road, Sacramento (Between West El Camino and San Juan.) For more information, go to www.sacramentoaudubon.org or contact Julie Serences, the Audubon Education Chair, at 548-0618

More Local Events

2009 DEER CREEK HILLS HIKE, BIKE, AND RIDE

Sunday, March 1, 9am - 1pm, Equestrian Ride

Saturday, March 28, 8am, Wildflower Hike

Sunday, March 29, 9am - 1pm, Equestrian Ride

Hikers/Riders should meet at Latrobe and Stone House Roads (north of Highway 16 or Jackson Rd. and west of Rancho Murieta). Please bring layers of clothing for all weather types. Water, light snacks and a hat for warmth and shade are also suggested. The conditions of hiking routes vary and may include stream or fence crossings and uneven terrain. Heavy rain and/or wind cancel hike/ride.

Please RSVP with Gina Silvernale at 731-8798 or ginasilvernale@hotmail.com - tour size is limited for your enjoyment. More information can be found in January's *Observer* or you can contact Sacramento Valley Conservancy at their website, www.sacramentovalleyconservancy.org or call 731-8798.

SACRAMENTO SPLASH CRITTER WALK

Sacramento Splash is presenting a Nature in the Neighborhood family event - the Vernal Pool Critter Walk at Mather Field, Saturday, February 21st from 1pm - 4pm. Every year, Sacramento Splash teaches more than 2,000 elementary school students about the wonder of vernal pools. The Vernal Pool Critter Walk will be led by trained guides with the help of junior vernal pool experts from across Sacramento County.

The walk will showcase the tiny animals that spring to life when the vernal pools fill with water. You will see Fairy Shrimp, Tadpole Shrimp, pollywogs, flatworms, and dozens of other animals that live in the aquatic vernal pool ecosystem. These species are specially adapted to complete their life cycles before the pools dry down. Come April, the water will be gone and the pools will be full of flowers, so meet these amazing little critters before it's too late!

We'll be walking through a grassland so be prepared for tall grass and uneven terrain. Wear tough pants, sturdy shoes, and bring rain gear. In the event of heavy rain, we will cancel and reschedule for Saturday, February 28th: 1pm - 4pm. For more information visit www.sacsplash.org and click on "Nature in the Neighborhood, where you may reserve a spot for this program (strongly recommended). Or you may call Splash at 364-2437. The Splash Education Center is located at 4426 Excelsior Rd, Mather, CA 95655. Recommended donation: \$10/adult, \$5/child (5-18). All children must be accompanied by an adult.

NEW EDITION OF *BIRDING IN THE SACRAMENTO REGION*

A new “must have” guide for anyone birding in the Sacramento area has just been published by SAS. It’s an updated and greatly expanded fourth edition of our popular *Birding in the Sacramento Region*. It covers 77 sites, nearly twice as many as the previous edition, all described by experienced birders familiar with the birding spots. We have had it for sale at our General Meetings since November and it is ‘flying off the shelves.’

New Google maps allow more precise pinpointing of site locations, and the separate section on where to find different species is much more detailed. Nearly 200 pages, it also includes information on where to find check lists and guides for other areas in Northern California, how to contact Audubon chapters and other conservation organizations in this part of the state, with addresses and websites, and a rundown on special events throughout the year.

It is ring-bound to withstand heavy use, with a sturdy plastic cover featuring portraits by Dan Brown of the Nuttall’s Woodpecker, California Thrasher, and Yellow-billed Magpie, all unique to this area.

The book can be purchased for \$10 at our meetings, but can also be found at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center, and with a slight mark-up from Wild Birds and Gardens at Madison and Fair Oaks, Wild Birds Unlimited at Loehman’s Plaza, and The Naturalist in Davis.

Our unending thanks and appreciation for an excellent job go out to all of the many people who worked so hard compiling, writing, rewriting, photographing and mapping all the information for so many wonderful area birding sites.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!

Thanks to the following for their generous donations:

Pablo Garza, Peggy Goldstein, Tom Graham, Christine Hansen, Tim Jackson, Maria Nicholas Kelly, Martha Lennihan, Ann Meckfessel, Wayne Monson, Mary Morris, and Phillip and Marilyn Isenberg to the **General Fund**.

Joann Anglin, Karen Brookhyser, Peggy Cranston, Carole Anne Elzey, Tom Graham, Ken Holmes, LaVerne Ireland, Marc Irish, Jude Lamare, Robert Meagher, Wayne Monson, Lisa Moraga, Bruce Swinehart, Larry Thurmond and Flora Yen, to the **Conservation and Education Fund**.

Sara Gillespie and Dorothy Hodel to **Bobelaine**.

Tim Fitzer made a donation to the **Conservation and Education Fund** in memory of Sheila Deaner Martignetti.

HORNY TOADS, YOU SAY?

A Survey Of Remaining Coast Horned Lizard Populations Within The Sierra Nevada And Central Valley Of California

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The Coast Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii* [=coronatum]) is a State listed Species of Special Concern and is on the decline throughout California. Reasons for decline are attributed to conversion of habitat to housing, golf courses, agriculture, extensive oil drilling, as well as the introduction of the invasive Argentine Ant, which the horned lizard won’t eat and which eliminates native ant species. Introduced European grasses and other annuals such as star-thistle also appear to have choked this species out from many undeveloped grassland areas where native grasses were much shorter and sparse.

WHERE IN THE SIERRA NEVADA AND CENTRAL VALLEY: The Coast Horned Lizard occurs on the west slope of the Sierra Nevada from the Central Valley up to around 2,500 ft in the northern Sierra and to around 6,200 ft in the southern Sierra. Historically this species occurred throughout much of the Sacramento Valley south throughout the San Joaquin Valley. Both Sierra Nevada and Central Valley populations are now few and isolated. Like most horned lizards, this species has specific habitat and dietary requirements. Found in grassland, chaparral, and open pine, oak, and pinyon-juniper woodlands, the Coast Horned Lizard is dependent on open ground situations where areas of loose soil allow for burial during periods of inactivity (i.e. daytime heat or hibernation). Such soil types include alkali, basalt, gabbro, and decomposed granite. Harvester ants, a main prey item, are also typically present. This is the only horned lizard within the region of focus and should be readily identifiable by its flattened, spiny body; stocky appearance; and horns adorning the head. Coloration varies with soil type.

SIGHTINGS: The relatively few historical vouchers and records for the Sierra Nevada and Central Valley are typically old, lack useful locality data, and very often represent extirpated populations. More information is needed to better understand Coast Horned Lizard abundance in the Sierra Nevada and Central Valley. Both recent sightings and older sightings from remaining natural areas are encouraged. Please include as much data as possible. The information gathered during this survey is not for public use. Coast Horned Lizards are protected by State law and should be left at the site of discovery.

Please report your sightings and locality information

to Jackson Shedd: jackson_shedd@sbcglobal.net. Useful information includes the following: • Name of observer(s) • Date and time • Locality (include county, elevation, GPS coordinates if available) • Land use at time of observation • Photo voucher



SAS NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to these
new members:

Pablo S Garza	Valeria Riazi
Dorothy Hodel	Rita Rippetoe
Ken Holmes	Patricia Staines
Mariam Janvier	Catherine Usi
Patricia Liva	Flora Yen

PLEASE, WHEN YOU MOVE!

Sacramento Audubon spends over \$50 annually to resend *The Observer* to members who have not shared their address changes with us. We'd rather spend that money on activities which enhance our enjoyment of wildlife. In my 3 year tenure, only 2 members have sent me their changes of address. Thanks so much.

Lea Landry, Membership Chair

FUTURE SPEAKERS AND PROGRAMS

March 19 – Chris Conard, *Birding Alaska*

April 16 – John (Jack) Muir Laws, *Exploring the Sierra Nevada as a Naturalist and an Artist*. Julie Serences will be coordinating an Education Program with Jack on the 16th, prior to the General Meeting

May 21 – Jim Estep, *Swainson's Hawks*

Mission Statement Sacramento Audubon Society

The mission of the Sacramento Audubon Society is to:

- Promote the protection and scientific study of wild birds;
- Promote the enjoyment and appreciation of wild birds through community outreach;
- Provide, encourage and support environmental educational opportunities; and
- Provide proactive leadership in the conservation of open space in the Sacramento region.

IN MEMORIUM, JO SMITH

Jo Smith, longtime Sacramento Audubon member, environmental advocate, and gifted wildlife artist, died last December 29th at her home in Carmichael. She was 83.

A founder of the American River Natural History Association (ARNHA) and the Urban Creeks Council, she pressed for the opening in 1976 of the county's Effie Yeaw Nature Center (EYNC), named for her friend and mentor. She was an ardent birder, participating in many Christmas counts with another friend, American River College natural history teacher Bruce Swinehart. She and Swinehart collaborated on his book of essays, *Nature's Window* in 1976.

Donations in her memory for EYNC may be sent to ARNHA, P.O. Box 241, Carmichael, CA, 95609.

JOIN THE SACRAMENTO AUDUBON SOCIETY

Your membership supports the SAS mission of conservation, environmental education and protection of the region's natural ecosystems and diverse wildlife populations. Please include your email address if you would like to be added to our Action Alert List for letter/email writing on conservation issues.

Sacramento Audubon Society Membership Application

Lea Landry, Membership Chair

11054 Autumnwind Lane, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670-4224

llandry@softcom.net (916) 638-1141

Date _____ *The Observer* Newsletter \$25 per address \$ _____

Donation for Conservation/Education \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Make checks payable to Sacramento Audubon Society

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP + 4 _____

Email _____

Send address changes to our Membership Chair to help keep down our costs.

Observations continued from page 10

on 11/2), a **Yellow Warbler** on Staten Island during the 12/14 Stockton CBC, a **Pink-sided Junco** near Lake Berryessa on 12/14, a **Grosbeak**, possibly a **Rose-breasted**, seen at CRP on 12/26, widespread **Pine Siskins** reports (down slightly from November), and a **California sea lion** regularly reported at Discovery Park.

Many of these reports first appeared on the Central Valley Bird Club Listserv. Visit www.cvbirds.org and click "Listserv" for details. With over 100 reports, it is impossible to list everyone; however, I want to thank the following for reports on the above species and for providing additional information:

Roger Adamson, Bob Barnes, Todd Easterla, Andy Engilis, Steve Hampton, Ed Harper, Manfred Kusch, Jeri Langham, Cathie LaZier, Roger Marlowe, Ed Pandolfino, Deren Ross, Mary Schiedt, Zach Smith, John Sterling, Craig Swolgaard, John Trochet, and Dan Williams.

Thanks to everyone for their reports—without them, this column would not be possible.

Chris Conard

Seasonal Observations

December 1 to December 31
Rare and Unusual Bird Reports
www.cvbirds.org/ListServ.htm

December was another fairly quiet month, though there were many birders afield and some interesting reports. Fewer **Rough-legged Hawks** were seen than last year, but there were still fair numbers as compared to the last five years. The raptor highlight of the month was finding all three subspecies of **Merlin** on the 12/30 Lincoln CBC—the **Richardson's "prairie" Merlin** is very rare in the state. Excellent numbers of **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** were reported, with over 50 on the Putah Creek CBC, and even one in Sacramento, where there are but a handful of records, on 12/28 at South Side Park.

Local highlights include Yolo County's first **Brown Pelican**: a juvenile flying near Rd 102 to the north of Davis on 12/23. A **Eurasian Green-winged Teal** (or **Common Teal**) was present at the Davis Wetlands from 12/6 to at least 12/23. An adult **Vega Gull** was reported at the Davis Wastewater Treatment Plant (WTP) on 12/6. Many authorities recognize several new species out of the **Herring Gull** complex. This darker-backed version from Asia is one of the most likely to turn up in California, but it should be carefully documented. An adult **Glaucous Gull** was found at the Sutter NWR on 12/15-16 and a first winter **Glaucous Gull** was at the Woodland WTP on 12/24. On the 12/28 Sacramento CBC, over 300 of both **Glaucous-winged Gulls** and **Thayer's Gulls** were reported at the Davis Landfill

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north of Rd 28H, along with one first winter **Kumlien's Iceland Gull** (this species is on the state review list and requires documentation), and one first winter **Western Gull**.

Other interesting reports include a light morph **Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk** in Solano County south of Winters (reported along Timms Rd in the first half of the month), ten **Chestnut-collared Longspurs** southwest of Lincoln along Sunrise Blvd on 12/30, the continuing hybrid **Bufflehead x Common Goldeneye** at Lake Solano, a female **Red-breasted Merganser** on Greenhaven Lake on 12/28, a **Pacific Golden-Plover** at the Woodland WTP on 12/24, a **Band-tailed Pigeon** along Putah Creek upstream of Davis on 12/13, a **Western Kingbird** at Yolo Grasslands Park southeast of Davis on the very late date of 12/13 (perhaps a first December record for Yolo County), a **Cassin's Vireo** near Woodland on 12/25, "a group" of **Steller's Jays** on private property northeast of Lincoln on 12/30, a **Barn Swallow** along the American River Parkway near River Bend (formerly Goethe) Park on 12/4, a **Townsend's Solitaire** at Lake Solano on 12/14 (perhaps continuing, since one was there

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Copy deadline is the 15th of the month. Send all copy to the Editor. Observations must reach the Seasonal Observations Editor by the 8th of the month.

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Observations continued on page 9