



# *The* **OBSERVER**

Sacramento Audubon Society

## *General Meeting*

**Thursday, January 17**  
**Shepard Garden and Art Center**  
**7pm General Meeting**

### **Bluebird Nesters Want Your Help!**

**Don Yoder**

Don Yoder was born in Illinois, the heart of the corn belt, in 1921. Living on farms until of high school age, there was a great opportunity to see native wildlife, and birds were of particular interest.

The purchase of a new home in a developing California community in 1971 led to the viewing of land being cleared during the nesting season for Western Bluebirds. Yoder watched as “displaced birds searched in vain for cavities which ‘were there in the morning’ but ‘gone by afternoon.’” After moving in, and in an effort to create a solution for bluebirds, Yoder built and hung six nest boxes and hoped for the best. Upon retirement in 1984 he began in earnest to build nestboxes for his own trail and for others.

Yoder noticed the absence of a successful bluebird organization in California and in September 1994, he set up the California Bluebird Recovery Program. Suggestions and encouragement from groups in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Ohio have aided the plot and the pattern of nestbox building for organizations in the Western effort.

This Program currently includes 39 county coordinators in 35 counties. With the help of Hatch Graham, Coordinator for El Dorado and Amador Counties, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the U.S. Forest Service permitting access to millions of acres of Public Lands for cooperative nestbox siting and monitoring.

Mr. Yoder has traveled extensively up and down the state to present programs in the interest of bluebirds and other cavity nesters and was awarded a plaque by the North American Bluebird Society for Outstanding Contribution to the Field of Bluebird Conservation. Please join Don Yoder’s inspiring and informative evening presentation as he discusses nest box construction, location, trail monitoring, and record keeping.

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](http://www.sacramentoaudubon.org) and click on Society Info/Meetings, for further information, including a map and directions.

*Sally Riggs, Program Chair*

## **GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT**

**A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT WITH NATURE!**

In February, volunteers throughout the U.S. and Canada are invited to “Count for Fun, Count for the Future!”

Millions of novice and accomplished bird watchers can make their fascination with nature add up for science and for the future during the 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, led by Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. During “Presidents’ Day” weekend, February 15–18, 2008, anyone can count birds from wherever they are and enter their tallies online at [www.birdcount.org](http://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.

“These volunteers are counting not only for fun but for the future,” said Tom Bancroft, Chief Science Officer for Audubon. “Each tally helps us learn more about how our North American birds are doing, and what that says about the health and the future of our environment.”

People of all ages and experience levels are invited to take part wherever they are—at home, in schoolyards, at local parks or wildlife refuges, even counting birds on a balcony. Observers count the highest number of each species they see during at least 15 minutes on one or more of the count days. Then they enter their tallies on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

The web site provides helpful hints for identifying birds. Participants can compare results from their town or region with others, as checklists pour in from throughout the U.S. and Canada. They can also view bird photos taken by participants during the count and send in their own digital images for the online photo gallery and contest.

In 2007, Great Backyard Bird Count participants made history, breaking records for the number of birds reported, and the number of checklists. Participants sent in 81,203 checklists tallying 11,082,387 birds of 613 species.

This article was contributed by National Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

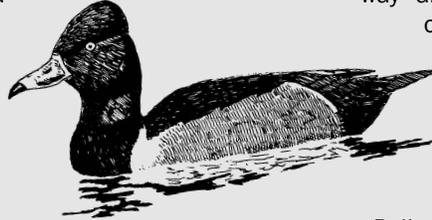
# Field Trip Findings

**Solano Lake/Putah Creek (12/9)** Leader Mark Martucci reported: "Ten birders had 56 species of birds and seven River Otter on a very cold and windy day along Putah Creek. Highlights were Hooded Mergansers, Phainopepla, Barrow's Goldeneye, and White-Throated Sparrow."

**Sandhill Cranes and other Wintering Birds of the Sacramento Valley (12/8)** About 20 participants viewed hundreds of cranes in this "Save Our Sandhill Cranes" tour that ranged from the Cosumnes River to Staten Island Preserves. Many Tundra Swans and ducks were also seen at Staten Island, Cathie LaZier said. Co-coordinator Mike Savino reported that the tour was preceded by an informative discussion of crane behaviour by Gary Sivey of the International Crane Foundation. Sivey told of a captive program to attach radio telemetry to the legs of local wintering cranes to track their movement patterns. It was found that the birds roost at night in shallow water for protection against coyotes and other predators, and move out in daytime to dry fields to feed on leftover harvested corn, rice and wheat.

**Caswell Memorial State Park, San Joaquin County (12/5)** — Leader Gary Fregien reported: "Three of us braved morning valley fog and cold, but as we approached the park there was already a hint of sunshine. Most numerous birds were Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Yellow-rumped Warblers. We also had good numbers of Fox Sparrows, as well as Golden and White-crowned, and a few Lincoln's. Hermit Thrushes were more in evidence than American Robins. We had five species of woodpecker, although we had to hunt for a colony of Acorn Woodpeckers. We had overflights of both Snow and Greater White-fronted Goose, and some Violet-green Swallows. Waterfowl was hard to come by on the river. One lonely Pied-billed Grebe was being kept company by a Belted Kingfisher. Turkey Vultures were everywhere, in the sky and in tree-

tops. We had at least two resident Red-shouldered Hawks, a Red-tailed Hawk, and a surprise, sudden and quick visit from a Sharp-shinned Hawk, which dove into the brush chasing some small birds. Both kinglets and Bewick's Wrens were highly agitated after the attack. Forty-three species for the day, which turned out bright and clear, and unseasonably warm. We each agreed it was one of our nicest days birding."



Stephen D'Amato

**Nimbus Fish Hatchery (12/3)** No contest for best bird of the day honors. A Bald Eagle that had been hanging out in the area for several days put in an appearance, leader Jack Hiehle said. That was good because gulls were down markedly for this time of year, mainly because of a dearth of spawned-out salmon that usually return in November.

**Sailor Bar Area (12/7)** — No one turned up for this cloudy Friday morning trip, Jack Hiehle reported.

**Nimbus Fish Hatchery, American River (12/2)** — Leader Ed Harper reported: "About 20 eager birders showed up to study gulls. Due to the small run of salmon this fall, not as many gulls were present as is normally the case, but we still had plenty of birds to study. We have five species of gulls of various age classes to go through. No Mew Gulls were seen this year, but we had nice looks at 6 or 7 Thayer's Gulls. Perhaps upstaging our study was a Peregrine Falcon that flew, more or less in continuous view of us, from 9 to 10:30am. We strayed from our study of gulls long enough to view many other species of birds including Barrow's Goldeneye, Green Heron, Downy Woodpecker, and White-throated Swift. It was a marvelous morning.

**Great American River Wildlife Count (12/1)** — For the first time in the 23-year history of this census, two warblers, the Northern Parula and Common Yellowthroat, were observed, coordinator Jack Hiehle reported. A record 62 participants recorded 109 species, one less than the previous high, on the parkway and Lower American River

on a sunny but cold day that turned windy in the afternoon. Other notable birds included Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Sora Rail, White Pelicans, and Common Loon. Jack's non-bird report was notable for what were not seen-beavers, muskrats and coyotes. And very few Ground Squirrels were seen, probably because of the chilly weather. But there were many deer, especially at Ancil Hoffman Park, including a 5-pointer and lots of 3 pointers, along with Fox Squirrels.

**Effie Yeaw Nature Center (11/29)** Purple Finch, Cedar Waxwing, Osprey, Spotted Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, and Common Goldeneye topped the list compiled by leader Jack Hiehle's group.

**Goethe Park (11/25)** — Leader Cathie Lazier reported: "A quiet birding morning tallied 40 species, no surprises. There were good looks at Red-shouldered Hawks and kinglets flashing their ruby crowns. We looked at some "weeds in winter", and enjoyed blooming Coyote Bush and Oracle Oak showing its hybrid heritage with Live Oak green, and Black Oak gold, fall color."

**Discovery Park (11/24)** — Cathie LaZier, filling in for Maureen Geiger, reported that "A very dark Merlin was the bird of the day on this trip. There were also good looks at Lincoln's Sparrows, Hermit Thrush, and several Red-shouldered Hawks. Hundreds of Cedar Waxwings were actively feeding on the wild grapes."

Pete Hayes

## TIME TO FOCUS ON FEEDERS!

A project separate from the Great Backyard Bird Count in February is the ongoing 21st season of Project FeederWatch. It is currently underway, but you can sign up at any time. As with the GBBC, your counts will help scientists monitor changes in feeder-bird populations over the winter from year to year. New participants receive a kit with a handbook, a bird-identification poster, a calendar, and an instruction booklet.

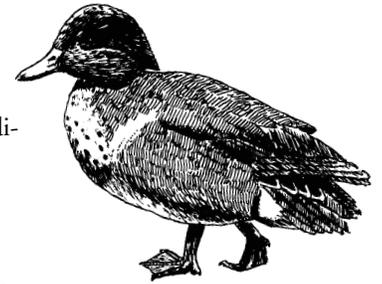
Join the flock! For more information about Project FeederWatch or to sign up please visit [www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/) or call (800) 843-2473. There is a \$15 fee to defray the cost of the materials. You can also learn more about the project and how to attract birds to your feeders by following the link on the All About Birds home page at [www.allaboutbirds.org](http://www.allaboutbirds.org).

# 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](mailto:spskua2@comcast.net) for trips through February 3. From February 6th on, call the scheduler Richard Barbieri, 966-4603, [offleash56@yahoo.com](mailto:offleash56@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

## CHRISTMAS COUNT DATES

### Tuesday, January 1, Angwin Christmas Count

Compiler: Floyd Hayes, 707/965-7577  
[floyd\\_hayes@yahoo.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@yahoo.com)

### Thursday, January 3, Rio Cosumnes Christmas Count

Compiler: Andrew Engilis, Jr., 530/752-0364, [aengilisjr@ucdavis.edu](mailto:aengilisjr@ucdavis.edu)

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### Tuesday, January 1, 8am Bobelaine Sanctuary Walk Leader: Brian Gilmore, 451-9146

A New Year's day fresh morning walk rather than sitting around watching television! Join Brian for a stroll through this great riparian habitat. Herons, egrets, cormorants and grebes should be on the water. Yellow-rumped Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and a variety of sparrows will be seen. Take Highway 99 north toward Yuba City; about 2 miles north of the Feather River Bridge turn right on Laurel Avenue. Follow Laurel Avenue to a dead end at the Bobelaine parking lot. Bring liquids and a snack.

### Wednesday, January 2, 8am to Noon Walk Through Goethe Park Leader: Jack Hiehle (916) 967-0777

Jack will meet people at the end of Arden Way, on the north side of the river. Walking into the William Pond area, he'll cross the bike bridge into Goethe Park. From the south side of the river you could enter Goethe Park (fee area) and park in the lot nearest the bike bridge; then meet Jack on the bridge. Jack will be looking for mammals and birds along the river and in the park, and he won't neglect the plants. This is a good trip for beginners; bring liquids and a snack.

### Saturday, January 5, 8am Gray Lodge Wildlife Area Leader: Doug O'Bannion, 681-0257

Doug, who is an enthusiastic and knowledgeable birder, will lead you to Gray Lodge, one of California's best birding areas for thousands of ducks and geese. There is an observation platform and tour route for excellent viewing. After Gray Lodge he will return by way of the west side of the Sutter Buttes. This is a great area for wintering raptors and grassland birds. Bring a lunch, liquids, and FRS radios. Meet at the Park and Ride lot on Hwy 99 at Elkhorn Blvd, just north of downtown Sacramento and the I-5/99 split.

### Sunday, January 6, 7am Post Christmas Count Coastal Birding Trip Leaders: Mark Cudney, 987-2422 [mcudney@aol.com](mailto:mcudney@aol.com) Tim Fitzer, 870-5207 [spskua2@comcast.net](mailto:spskua2@comcast.net)

This trip could be to Point Reyes, Bodega Bay or both. We 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. Bring warm clothes, lunch, liquids and FRS radios for an all day trip. We will meet at the Park and Ride off I-80 in West Sacramento. Take the West Capitol Ave. exit, turn left at the light and then left again into the Park and Ride lot.

### Wednesday January 9, 8am Pleasants Valley Road/Putah Creek (Solano Co.) Leader: Gary Fregien, 708-0636 [calaveri@sbcglobal.net](mailto:calaveri@sbcglobal.net)

This outing entails driving to the Vacaville area to pick up Pleasants Valley Road, and birding our way up to Hwy 128 along Putah Creek, Solano Lake and the

Monticello Dam Overlook. We will make several stops along Pleasants Valley Rd., looking for winter passerines, including Phainopepla. Along Putah Creek and Solano Lake we should see Barrow's Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, American Dipper, and Osprey. At the Monticello Dam Overlook, we'll be watching for Canyon and Rock Wrens, and possibly Peregrine Falcon. Plan on spending 3-4 hours birding, plus driving time. There will be minimal hiking, but dress for winter conditions. Bring along hand held radios, food and water. Our lunch spot will be at Solano Lake County Park, where there is a day-use fee. Meet Gary at the Park and Ride off Mace Blvd and I-80 in Davis, behind Ikeda's Market. Car pooling is strongly advised, due to limited access at stops and the distance traveled.

### Saturday, January 12 1st Annual Galt Winter Bird Festival

Check out the article on page 8 of this issue of the *Observer*, or get information directly from (209) 366-7220, or [www.ci.galt.ca.us](http://www.ci.galt.ca.us).

### Sunday, January 13, 8am Robinson Road Area, Birds Landing and Montezuma Hills Leader: John York, 371-2239 [sonofyork@earthlink.net](mailto:sonofyork@earthlink.net)

This is a great area for wintering Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks, Prairie Falcons, Merlins, Curlews, Mountain Plovers, and other great grassland birds. These are rural, low traffic roads that allow for scoping and studying birds. Bring warm clothes, liquids, lunch and FRS radios. We will meet at the Park and Ride off I-80 in West Sacramento, the last exit before the causeway. Take the West Capitol Ave. exit, turn left at the light and then left again into the Park and Ride lot.

*Field Trips* continued on page 4

*Field Trips* continued from page 3

**Tuesday, January 15, 7am**  
**Point Reyes Birds and Mammals**  
**Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777**

This is Jack's annual trip to Point Reyes to see elephant seals, other mammals, birds and fauna. Be prepared for a full day; bring lunch, liquids, warm clothes and FRS radios. Jack will meet on Fulton Ave just before Fair Oaks Blvd. Call Jack for more details.

**Wednesday, January 16, 8am**  
**Tonzi Road (Amador Co.)**  
**Leader: Gary Fregien, 708-0636**  
**calaveri@sbcglobal.net**

Join Gary on a road trip to the Sierra foothills in Amador County, along Highways 16, 124 and 49. The focus of the trip will be the Tonzi Road area, a back-country road north of Ione. Travel along this route will include some stops and walking short distances. There are an interesting and surprising variety and number of passerines and raptors in this area. There have been a Red-naped Sapsucker, Red-breasted Sapsuckers, Western Bluebirds, Hermit Thrushes, American, Lesser and Lawrence's Goldfinches, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and a variety of flycatchers, sparrows and raptors observed here. Time permitting, this trip may also include stops for waterfowl at ponds near Sutter Creek and Ione. There will be minimal hiking, but dress for winter conditions. Bring along hand held radios, food and water. Meet Gary at the College Greens/Raley's Shopping Center lot at 8391 Folsom Blvd Park near the Starbuck's. This Folsom Blvd Raley's is between Jackson Road (Hwy 16) and Florin-Perkins Road.

**Saturday, January 19, 8am**  
**Sacramento Wildlife Refuge**  
**Leader: Lisa Moraga, 455-4786**  
**ploverlover@earthlink.net**

The Sacramento Wildlife Refuge is home to thousands of wintering ducks and geese which attract Peregrine Falcons and Bald Eagles. There is a 3.7 mile tour route with a high viewing platform that offers great looks at the many species of waterfowl. This trip will last until mid-afternoon so bring lunch, liquids and warm clothing. On the return trip, Lisa will take Rd 16 looking for sparrows, longspurs, raptors, eagles, owls and Hungarian Kuvas Sheep Dogs. This is a fun day you will not want to miss. If you have FRS radios bring them; they come in handy. We will meet at the Jack-in-the-box parking lot off I-5 north, exit Rd 102 on your right as you approach Woodland.

**Sunday, January 20, 8am**  
**Habitat Restoration Day at Effie Yeaw**  
**Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777**

Join Jack for a fun day at Effie Yeaw Nature Area in Ancil Hoffman Park. Why stay home watching a "silly" football game, when you can be in the fresh air and nature? Possible tasks include weed removal, pond clean-up, erecting fencing around oak trees for protection and checking bird nest boxes. You will have fun, meet new friends and contribute to the environment. Please call Jack if you plan to come or if you have any questions.

**Saturday, January 26, 8:15am**  
**Rush Ranch and King Ranch**  
**Leaders: Maureen Geiger, 444-0804**  
**mkgeiger@sbcglobal.net**  
**Joanne Castro**

This trip to Solano County will begin with a birding tour of Rush Ranch, an operating cattle ranch dating back to the Gold Rush days, which is owned and managed by the Solano Land Trust. Joanne Castro has lead birding tours for Napa-Solano Audubon for many years and will introduce us to the birds of Rush Ranch and the surrounding Suisun Marsh. Maureen will then lead us to the King Ranch, another Solano Land Trust property just off Hwy 680. This site, high above Solano County, with a spectacular view of the surrounding area, 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 Capitol exit; turn left at the light; then left again into the lot. This trip will last into mid- to late-afternoon.

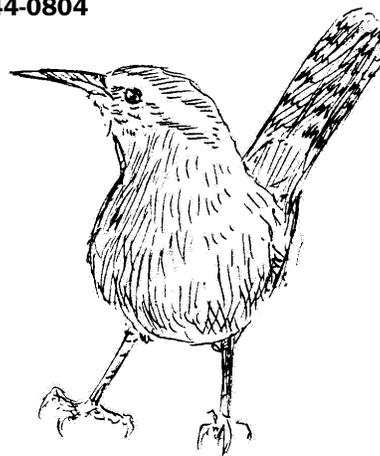
**Sunday, January 27, 8am**  
**Salt Springs Valley**  
**Leaders: Tim Fitzer, 870-5207**  
**spskua2@comcast.net**  
**Sheila Martignetti**  
**deaner@csus.edu**

This area is located in western Calaveras County about a half-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 want to visit. The trip will last into the afternoon so bring lunch, liquids, warm clothing and FRS radios.

Meet at the Park and Ride at the southeast corner of Sheldon Road and Highway 99.

**Tuesday, January 29, 7:30am**  
**Gray Lodge and Colusa Wildlife Area**  
**A Joint Trip with Yolo Audubon**  
**Leader: Sami LaRocca**  
**(530) 908-0288**  
**sami182@charter.net**

Come join Sami on a Tuesday winter day to see these two similar wetland habitats. On the ride north we'll look for Tundra Swans in the flooded rice fields. If you haven't been to Gray Lodge during the winter months this is just the place to go to see spectacular views of Snow Geese as well as numerous species of ducks. These waterfowl



Kirsten Munson

attract Bald Eagles and other raptors. This is a long car loop with good opportunities for walking. At the Colusa Wildlife Area we may see some species such as Eurasian Widgeon which we may have missed earlier. Meet the group coming from Davis at the Jack-in-the-Box in Woodland, off Hwy 5 at County

Road 102 and East Main. All levels of birders are welcome. Bring water, lunch, binoculars and scopes. There is a \$2.50 per person fee at Gray Lodge; it's also a good place to purchase a Duck Stamp to support this essential habitat. NOTE: High winds or significant rain cancels this trip.

**Saturday, February 2, 8am**  
**Sun City, Lincoln**  
**Leader: Dave Pearson, 408-4273**  
**Firesparkbird@yahoo.com**

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.

**Sunday, February 3, 9am  
East Lawn Cemetery  
Leader: Mary Beth Metcalf, 456-7382**

Meet Mary Beth at the corner of 43rd Street and Folsom Blvd; park on 43rd Street. The trees in the cemetery are a winter home to many species of birds. In past years Mary Beth has found Golden-crowned Kinglets, Red-breasted Sapsucker, and Black-throated Gray Warbler, in addition to the usual birds. This is a slow paced half day walk and excellent for beginners.

**Wednesday, February 6, 8am  
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.

**Saturday, February 9, early  
River Walk Bird Count  
Cosumnes River Preserve  
Recorded Information, 684-2816**

Meet at the Visitor Center on Franklin Blvd south of Twin Cities Road, for this monthly birding census trip. It's a great birding area, always full of surprises, and joining the group trip is a good way to find out what's happening at the preserve. This walk covers about four miles, and, at a leisurely pace, should take approximately five hours, so

be sure to bring a lunch and liquids. You must check the recorded information a day or two before to get the exact meeting time and any other updated details.

**Saturday, February 9, Sunset Trip  
2 pm till dark  
Sandhill Cranes and Other Wintering  
Birds of the Sacramento Valley  
A "Save Our Sandhill Cranes"  
sponsored trip  
Co-ordinator: Mike Savino, 446-1392**

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, then drive out along Desmond Road and possibly further, searching for more cranes and other birds. Optional dinner afterwards with SOS Cranes board members for further discussions. Dress for changeable weather; bring scopes and FRS radios if you have them. From Sacramento, take I-5 south to Twin Cities Road; 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](http://www.cosumnes.org). This is a great trip for beginners.

**Sunday, February 10, 7:30am  
Best Slough and  
Yuba County Wetlands  
Leader: Richard Barbieri, 966-4603  
offleash56@yahoo.com**

Best Slough's drainage runs west out of the foothills and ends near Hwy 70 to meet with Algodon Slough which runs south and feeds into the Bear River. It's here at this confluence that Richard will lead you to see some of Yuba County's wetland habitat and surrounding properties. Meet Richard at the Park and Ride at Hwy 99 and Elkhorn Blvd. Take I-5 north from Sacramento; at the I-5/Hwy 99 split, take 99 and take the first exit after the split. Turn left over the freeway; the Park and Ride is on the southwest corner.

**Wednesday, February 13, 8am  
Yolo Wildlife Area  
Leader: Dan Tankersley, 606-6518  
dtankers@winfirst.com**

This marshy area, just minutes from downtown Sacramento, is a winter refuge for a good variety of ducks and shorebirds, as well as the larger waterbirds and a variety of sparrows. Uncommon birds are frequently found here. Dan plans a longer stay at the first stop, with a scope set up to give you good views of the birds, so grab your cup of coffee (and a doughnut?) and plan to meet him at the first parking lot inside the wildlife area. This outing will last 3 to 4 hours. From Sacramento take I-80 across

*Field Trips* continued on page 6

**2008 TRICOLORED BLACKBIRD SURVEY**

Volunteers are needed for the 2008 Tricolored Blackbird Survey coordinated by Audubon California in collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This citizen-based, statewide survey provides critical information for determining the status of Tricolored Blackbird populations in California and is critical in conservation strategies to protect this species. The colony locations and numbers of Tricolored Blackbirds change from year to year, making it impossible to track without the help of volunteers across the state.

A statewide survey in California is particularly important because more than 95 percent of the world's Tricolored Blackbirds live in California. Tricolored Blackbirds were perhaps one of the most numerous birds in California. Heermann reported in 1859 flocks of thousands and saw a wintering flock in Solano County "numbering so many thousands as to darken the sky for some distance by their masses." Accounts such as these were reported from many areas across California, especially the Central Valley. In 1937, it was estimated that more than 700,000 adult birds per year occurred in only eight counties of the Central Valley. As of 1997 approximately 233,000 Tricolored Blackbirds remained, a decline of nearly 34% since a previous survey only three years earlier, in 1994.

These dramatic declines are cause for real concern for the species' future. Tricolored Blackbird's colonial nesting behavior makes it vulnerable to nesting failures affecting thousands of nests at large colonies; colonies exceed 100,000 birds in some cases (Tricolored Blackbird forms the largest colonies of any North American passerine bird). Continued loss of habitat and this species' use of agricultural grain crops continue to threaten this species.

A partnership of state and federal agencies, Audubon California, the Central Valley Birding Club, and other conservation organizations are underway to protect this species and its habitats. However, accurate estimates of population sizes and knowledge of their breeding sites are needed. Your help with the 2008 surveys is a critical part of obtaining this information.

When: One full day between April 25th and 27th, 2008\*\*  
Where: Statewide. You can conduct surveys in the County of your choice.  
How: Contact Rodd Kelsey at (530) 795-0660 or [rkelsey@audubon.org](mailto:rkelsey@audubon.org).

\*\* (Additional surveys following this will also be welcomed and of great value).

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the Yolo Causeway and turn right onto the frontage road just past the causeway. Turn right at the stop sign; circle under the free-way; then make a left up onto the levee and down into the wildlife area. This trip will end before noon. Beginners are encouraged to come.

**February 15-16-17-18  
Great Backyard Bird Count**

Wherever you are, don't forget to count birds, for at least 15 minutes, on at least one day, in an area of your choice (doesn't have to be your backyard), and record the results at [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc).

See our front page article for more information about this fun and easy way to contribute to scientific information on our nation's bird populations.

**February, 16, 17 and 18  
(President's Day Holiday)**

**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.

**Saturday, February 16, very early  
Tall Forest Bird Count  
Cosumnes River Preserve  
Recorded Information, 684-2816**

Meet at the farm center gate at the intersection of Desmond and Bruceville Roads, ON TIME to join this monthly bird count. Usually led by John Trochet, this area is normally closed, so this is your opportunity to bird there. John has an appreciation of nature on many levels, and a trip with him is always exciting. You must check the recorded information a day or two previously to get the exact meeting time and any other updated details. Arrive a little early, as this trip always leaves promptly.

**Sunday, February 17  
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, and can include removing noxious weeds, pond clean-up, and other chores, so call Jack for details and meeting time and place.

**Wednesday, February 20, 8am  
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.

**Thursday Feb. 21, 8am  
Grizzly Island Wildlife Area and  
Robinson Road  
Leader: Sami LaRocca (530) 908-0288  
sami182@charter.net**

Let's go to Solano County in late winter to see which hawks are still around on Robinson Road. We'll have a chance to see Prairie Falcon and Mountain Plovers which are often found in this area. Then on to Grizzly Island, where a \$2.50 day use fee is needed. Here we'll drive around and check the wetland and grassland habitats for lingering wintering birds. Meet at the Park and Ride lot off Mace Boulevard (NE of Hwy 80; behind Ikeda's) in Davis at 8am. Bring water, snacks and lunch. All levels of birders are welcome, some binoculars will be available. We'll plan on returning by early afternoon.

NOTE: High winds or a significant rain-storm cancels this trip.

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## OUR HARD-WORKING EDUCATION COMMITTEE OUT AND ABOUT!

### SAS Education Field Trips

On November 29, Maureen Geiger and Julie Serences led a Mentor Nature walk with 40 Woodland High School students at Cache Creek Nature Reserve. The CWA sponsored trip helped prepare the high school students for their nature walk with third graders later in the week. An album of birds seen on the field trip was made available to the class and you can check it out at : <http://picasaweb.google.com/SacAudubon/WoodlandHighSchoolMentorNatureWalkBirds?authkey=VCdjjkZ1vvo>

### SAS Photo Collection at Work!

Speaking of on-line field trip check lists, SAS education committee would like to give a special thank you to all those photographers who have contributed to our photo library of Sacramento birds-Dan Tankersley, Chris Conard, Bill Grenfell, and Jan Tankersley (Hope we haven't missed anyone!)

The photos are being used in PowerPoint presentations for schools and libraries (GBBC) and to produce on-line photo check-lists for the CWA mentor program. Our presentations would be far less effective without your photos. Thanks again!

### Native Plants/Native Habitat

SAS Education Committee and the Sacramento Valley chapter of the California Native Plant Society are working together on a presentation geared to the general public, on creating backyard habitat by planting natives. It's a "how to presentation" based on a PowerPoint program developed for California Audubon by the San Diego Chapter of the Audubon Society. This will extend the "National Audubon At Home Program" to our local area. Details on presentations later this Spring. If you know of a group that might be interested in this kind of presentation please e-mail [education@sacramentoaudubon.org](mailto:education@sacramentoaudubon.org).

With an assist from the SVCNPS we are also working on a brochure to promote planting of native plants.

### GBBC Presentations

Some of you may have noticed in the Library News from the Sacramento Public Library that we will be making several presentations explaining the Great Backyard Bird Count (Feb 15-18, 2008) and talking about common backyard birds.

Jan 19 Galt-Marian O Lawrence Library, 2pm

Jan 26 South Natomas Library, 10am

Jan 29 Central Library, 6:30pm

Feb. 9 Arden-Dimick Library, 2pm

Presenters: Maureen Geiger, Sheila Green, Subhash Chand, Julie Serences

In addition several school presentations are planned. This is a perfect activity for families and beginners!

If anyone would like to help promote the GBBC please contact Julie at [education@sacramentoaudubon.org](mailto:education@sacramentoaudubon.org)

## *Be a Better Birder*

### **BIRD SONG CLASS TO BE OFFERED**

Tune up your ears for birding. Ed Harper has teamed up with Arcade Park and Recreation District and will be conducting three classes with three associated field trips for birders wanting to learn or improve their birding by ear. Class dates are March 26, April 9 and 30, with field trips on March 29, April 12, and May 3 to catch the highlights of bird song in our area. For more information or to enroll, contact the park district at 483-8377 or e-mail at [www.arcadecreekrecreation.com](http://www.arcadecreekrecreation.com).

Also, Ed is planning a repeat of last year's tour, Eastern Montana Prairies and Wetlands during the latter part of May. The exploratory tour in May 2007 developed an itinerary that was very productive for grassland specialties in this vast, bird-rich region of Montana. Contact Ed at [calidris@surewest.net](mailto:calidris@surewest.net) for details and bird list if interested.

### **"HOW TO BIRD" CLASS AT LEARNING EXCHANGE**

If you are a beginning birder or know anyone who is, this is their chance to join local birder, Maureen Geiger, in a class that covers the basics of birding for new enthusiasts. 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 on Howe Avenue, March 5 and 12, from 7-8:30pm, followed by a field trip on March 15. Contact Maureen at 444-0804 or the Learning Exchange at 929-9200 for more information.

### **ORNITHOLOGY CLASS AT SACRAMENTO CITY COLLEGE**

Introduction to Ornithology, will be offered this coming Spring Semester at Sacramento City College. Classes meet on Fridays, beginning on January 25. Lecture will be from 11:30am - 12:50pm, and lab from 1:30 - 4:35pm, in Lillard Hall, Room 109. There also will be several Saturday field trips during the semester, including an overnight (Saturday-Sunday) to Pt. Reyes in April. The course description (it's Biology 332) can be found at the college's website: [www.losrios.edu/scc/spring/Biology-BIOL.htm](http://www.losrios.edu/scc/spring/Biology-BIOL.htm) and registration information is at [www.losrios.edu/lrc/lrc\\_reg.html](http://www.losrios.edu/lrc/lrc_reg.html)

Please contact Alexis Ackerman if you have any questions: [ackerma@scc.losrios.edu](mailto:ackerma@scc.losrios.edu), 558-2387

### **PROCEEDINGS OF THE CALIFORNIA BURROWING OWL SYMPOSIUM**

The Proceedings have been edited by J.H. Barclay, K.W. Hunting, J.L. Lincer, J. Linthicum, and T.A. Roberts (vii + 197 pages, ISBN: 978-0-9800011-0-5) and have been published as the premiere volume of Bird Populations Monographs (No.1) by The Institute for Bird Populations and Albion Environmental, Inc. Price \$25 U.S. (includes tax and shipping). Contains 20 papers about burrowing owl regional

status, research, management, policy, and reference information (a bibliography of the Burrowing Owl in California) from the two-day California Burrowing Owl Symposium held in Sacramento during November 2003. Visit [www.albionenvironmental.com](http://www.albionenvironmental.com) to view the table of contents and to order; or can be ordered by calling (831) 469-9128 or by emailing [info@albionenvironmental.com](mailto:info@albionenvironmental.com).

### **SIERRA COLLEGE CLASS RETURNS TO FOCUS ON THE SIERRA NEVADA**

Spring 2008 at Sierra College will see the return of a favorite Sierra Nevada class. Back for its fourth season, the college will offer an interdisciplinary course (I-6) with a focus on California's favorite mountain range, the Sierra Nevada. "This course is a fun one to put together as it draws subject material and presenters from throughout the state," says Joe Medeiros, the course's coordinator and professor of biological sciences at the College. "We have assembled a wonderful group of lectures and speakers and we strongly encourage enrolling in this course to insure that the series will be available this spring."

Interdisciplinary 6 – The Sierra Nevada is a unique course that closely examines the myriad features that make the Sierra distinctive-specialist lecturers join in this integrated study-including the range's physical attributes (geography, geology, natural history), environmental history (human influences), management (economic utilization, exploitation, conservation), and its inspiration (art, photography, poetry, and literature).

"Professors, specialists, artists, photographers, authors, managers, conservationists, aficionados, and most, importantly, lovers of John Muir's "Range of Light" come together to make this class unique," says Medeiros. He adds, "It has been my absolutely favorite class to coordinate, simply because of the compassion and energy that it creates. Enrolled or not, the public is invited to join us and share the enthusiasm. All Sierra-lovers are welcome!"

Interdisciplinary 6: The Sierra Nevada, meets Thursday nights on the Rocklin Campus from 6-9pm. The class begins January 17, 2008. Students can enroll and attend each class at the Rocklin Campus or can take the class via the college's Distance Learning program, via cable TV. Enrollment information can be acquired from the college's website: [www.sierracollege.edu](http://www.sierracollege.edu)

For more information and a complete list of speakers go to [www.sierracollege.edu/Programs/divisions/SciMath/interdisciplinary/index.html](http://www.sierracollege.edu/Programs/divisions/SciMath/interdisciplinary/index.html) or contact

Joe Medeiros, 789-2725  
[jmedeiros@sierracollege.edu](mailto:jmedeiros@sierracollege.edu) or

Gary Noy, Center for Sierra Nevada Studies  
781-7184, [gnoy@sierracollege.edu](mailto:gnoy@sierracollege.edu)

## Upcoming Events

### ED HARPER FEATURED AT ARNHA PROGRAM

Sacramento Audubon's Ed Harper, birder and photographer extraordinaire, will be featured in a free American River Natural History program on "Birds of the American River Parkway." on Thursday, January 24 at 7pm, in the Assembly Building of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center in Ancil Hoffman Park.

The retired American River College mathematics and field ornithology instructor accompanies his striking bird images with humorous commentary about bird behaviour and "how I got that picture."

Light refreshments will be served.

### 1ST ANNUAL GALT WINTER BIRD FESTIVAL

Many migratory and resident birds call the Galt area their winter home. This 1st annual festival celebrates these birds with art, theatre, speakers and field trips to the Cosumnes River Preserve, all on Saturday, January 12.

Speakers include Gary Ivey, of the International Crane Foundation, Harry McQuillen, BLM manager of the Cosumnes River Preserve, David Yee of Stockton Audubon speaking on Birds of the Local Area, and a speaker from the California Raptor Rehabilitation Center.

A Children's Art Gallery will highlight Winter Bird artwork submitted by Galt students. The Crane Culture Theatre will present a story of farming, conservation and community. There will be informational exhibits, close up views of some of our feathered friends including live birds of prey, free children's activities, local food and art, and craft vendors.

There will be both a morning and an afternoon Winter Birds Tour to the Cosumnes River Preserve. There is no charge to attend the festival, but the Winter Birds Bus Tour is \$5 per person, (children under 18 are free). Early sign-ups are appreciated.

All festival activities happen at the Chabolla Center at 600 Chabolla Avenue in Galt. Get more information and activity schedule at [www.ci.galt.ca.us](http://www.ci.galt.ca.us), or call for recorded information at (209) 366-7220.

Mark Saturday, January 12, on your calendars now, and plan to attend.

### NAYARIT, MEXICO BIRD FESTIVAL

Some of our Swainson's Hawks winter in the Mexican state of Nayarit and Nayarit has a bird festival which will take place from January 19-26 in San Blas, Nayarit, Mexico. The migratory bird festival is "linked" to the Great Salt Lakes IBA in Utah, and has inspired similar festivals in the United States. The festival follows the pattern of traditional Mexican celebrations with an emphasis on natural history, and includes field trips, evening gatherings in the town square with dancers interpreting bird behavior, and traditional Mexican performances.

To learn more about how you can sign up for the festival, go to <http://avessanblas.uan.mx/ingles/index.html> or coordinate with Utah Linking Chair, Don Paul, through chapter services at [chapter\\_services@audubon.org](mailto:chapter_services@audubon.org).

### DON'T FORGET THESE JANUARY EVENTS

The Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival, is being held January 18-21, and Chico's Snow Goose Festival is January 25-27. Please see November's or December's *Observer* for more information including their websites and registration information phone numbers..

## VOLUNTEER POSITIONS NEED VOLUNTEERS!

### Program Chair

Our wonderfully hardworking Program Chair, Sally Riggs, has resigned after a move to southern California. Sally has provided the most wonderful programs for the past several years and has arranged the 2008 programs through April. So we are looking for a Program Chair to begin with the May 2008 program though we have several board members with a good leads on speakers. The next program would not be until September, 2008.

Sally has kept her notes on available programs and speakers so there is quite a good folder of ideas ready to go to the new Chairperson. While the Chair is responsible for sending the program write-up each month to the *Observer*, the speaker frequently has their own write-up prepared. The Chair also forwards the write-up to the Electronics Chair for the website. There are only 7 programs that need to be arranged each year because of months where we either have no meeting, or have a previously arranged program, such as in November.

If this sounds like a wonderful opportunity to become involved in Sacramento Audubon or if you have any questions, please contact Tim Fitzer at 870-5207 or email: [spskua2@comcast.net](mailto:spskua2@comcast.net)

### Publicity Chair

We are also looking for someone to handle publicity for Sacramento Audubon. It has been a few years since we've had anyone doing this job, so it can be whatever you make of it. Basic requirements would be getting our general meeting information published in the events section of local newspapers, featuring a field trip or an education program in neighborhood publications, and publicizing the Christmas Counts and the Great Backyard Bird Count. The posting online of some meetings, programs, etc. would also be helpful. You would work with the Education, Program, and Field Activities representatives who would provide the information to be publicized. If you're interested in this volunteer position or have questions, please contact Keith Wagner at 709-2308, or [k.wag@comcast.net](mailto:k.wag@comcast.net) for more information.

## SAS NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to these  
new members:

Jim Abram Daniel Thompson  
Steven Madrick Steven Totheroh  
Victoria McBride John Twilling  
Joan Rusche John Winchell

### 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.

### THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!

Thanks to the following for their generous donations:

Karen Benson, John Davidson, Richard Hagaman, Mary Howard, Donald Lee, Jane Taylor and James Waddell, to the **Conservation and Education Fund**.

Richard Begley, Richard Hagaman, Fred Klass, Donald Lee, Lachlan McClenahan and Jane Taylor, to the **Bobelaine Sanctuary Fund**.

Cecilia Welch and Maria Nicholas Kelly to the **General Fund**.

### 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 January 29, 2008 at 7pm at the SMUD Building, 6301 S Street, Sacramento.

## 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 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donation for maintenance Bobelaine Sanctuary \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to Sacramento Audubon Society

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Email \_\_\_\_\_

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

*Observations* continued from page 10

was an excellent find in a Rancho Cordova backyard on 11/25, and a **Chipping Sparrow** was found at the William B Pond access (ARP) on 11/23.

To the north of our typical coverage area was a female **Vermillion Flycatcher** at Graylodge Wildlife Area from 11/9 through at least 11/11. Other highlights include five to six **Swainson's Hawks** seen from I-5 over the Yolo Bypass on 11/23, the highest number of **Rough-legged Hawk** reports in the region in several years, over 200 **Mountain Plovers** on Robinson Rd, south of Dixon on 11/2, and widespread reports of **Brown Creepers** from throughout the Sacramento area.

Many of these reports first appeared on the Central Valley Bird Club Listserv. Visit [www.cvbirds.org](http://www.cvbirds.org) and click "Listserv" for details. With nearly 200 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, Dan Brown, Terry Colborn, Tanner Easterla, Todd Easterla, Andy Engilis, Gil Ewing, Maureen Geiger, Steve Hampton, Cliff Hawley, Scott Hoppe, Joan Humphrey, David Johnson, Jeri Langham, Ron Melcer, Frances Oliver, Kathy Parker, Ed Pandolfino, Mary Schiedt, Zach Smith, John Sterling, Craig Swolgaard, Dan Tankersley, John Trochet, Steve Walsh, and Dee Warenycia.

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

Chris Conard

# Seasonal Observations

**November 1 to November 30**  
**Rare and Unusual Bird Reports**  
[www.cvbirds.org/ListServ.htm](http://www.cvbirds.org/ListServ.htm)

As might be expected for this time of year, waterbirds stole the show. A first year **Surf Scoter** was found on William B Pond on 11/28, but was not seen the following day. A **Pacific Loon** was seen from Beal's Point on Folsom Lake with a large **Eared Grebe** flotilla on 11/12. A **Red-necked Grebe** was an excellent find on Lake Natoma on 11/23. This bird was seen by many and continued into December.

A **Ruff** and a **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** continued into November and were found at the Davis Wetlands on 11/3. The **Ruff** was reported again on 11/5. A **Franklin's Gull** continued from last month in front of the Davis Landfill on 11/11. This is likely the same bird first found on 7/1 and reported consistently through 9/9. A juvenile "**Kumlien's Gull**" was reported on 11/2 at the Davis Landfill. There is much discussion over whether this race is an **Iceland Gull** or a hybrid falling somewhere between **Iceland Gull** and **Thayer's Gull**. Nonetheless, it is currently considered a race of **Iceland Gull** by the American Ornithologists' Union. Despite regular reports, documentation is rarely submitted to the California Bird Records Committee ([wfo-cbrc.org/cbrc/](http://wfo-cbrc.org/cbrc/)). A juvenile **Western Gull** was reported from the Davis Landfill on 11/6. An adult **Western Gull** was found in Sutter County on Pleasant Grove Rd north of Striplin Rd on 11/7. Another adult **Western Gull** was found in Yolo

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County on Rd 25 two miles east of Rd 102 on 11/25.

A sapsucker showing strong characteristics of a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was reported at the Gristmill access of the American River Parkway (ARP) on

11/16. Another bird found in Auburn on 11/16 continued through the end of the month. This **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was photographed and carefully studied by many observers. A third **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was reported from north of Fairfield on 11/19 through at least 11/22. Apparently returning from last winter, a **Red-naped Sapsucker** was reported from Larchmont Park on 11/9. Later photographs of this bird showed some out of place red feathering, which was not shown by last year's bird.

There was an intriguing report of an **Ovenbird** from Cosumnes River Preserve (CRP) on 11/2. Unfortunately, this bird was not refound. A very late **Myiarchus flycatcher** (not identified to species) and a **Cassin's Finch** were both excellent finds at CRP on 11/4. Impressive for the date (11/22) was the report of three **Black-throated Gray Warblers** and six **Townsend's Warblers** at CRP. Two **White-throated Sparrows** were also found on the same visit. A **Green-tailed Towhee**

## Sacramento Audubon Society Information

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**Editor:** Sharon Wisecarver, e-mail, NOTE new address: [sawise7@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sawise7@sbcglobal.net)

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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