



The OBSERVER

Sacramento Audubon Society

General Meeting

Thursday, January 19, 2012

Effie Yeaw Nature Center, Assembly Room

7pm General Meeting

The Great Gray Owl of the Sierra Nevada

Josh Hull

The great gray owl exists in low numbers in the Sierra Nevada and is listed as endangered by the State of California. These owls live in mid- and high-elevation forests and meadow systems in and around Yosemite National Park. Although a highly charismatic species much of the life history and ecology of these secretive birds remains a mystery. In order to promote conservation efforts, a team of agency and academic scientists has been studying the great gray owls of the Sierra Nevada. Josh Hull will be presenting some of the recent evolutionary and ecological findings from this work.

Josh Hull works with the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Sacramento on endangered species recovery and is also an Adjunct Professor at UC Davis. In addition to his work with great gray owls, Josh is involved with several other raptor research projects including an examination of North American merlins and raptor banding in the Marin Headlands."

Sacramento Audubon meetings are held the third Thursday of the month at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center Assembly Room in Carmichael. The public is welcome. Visit our website www.sacramentoaudubon.org and click on Society Info/Meetings, for further information, including a map and directions.

Sally Walters, Program Chair

DON'T FORGET THE FIRST ANNUAL SAS KIDS' AND YOUNG ADULTS' CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT!!!

Our First Annual Kids' Christmas Bird Count is coming up on Saturday, January 7, 2012. Kids and young adults who sign up can be citizen scientists just like the adults who count birds! Currently, SAS sponsors three CBC's for adults: Sacramento, Woodfords and Folsom. Information gathered at these counts is used by scientists and others who study birds all over the world.

This Christmas bird count season, SAS is planning its first count for children and youth on January 7, 2012 at Cosumnes River Preserve. Sacramento area kids ages 6 to 16 can join the first group of young birders to participate in this exciting event. Volunteers are needed to help this event be a success, and reservations are a must for all children. To reserve space or to volunteer, contact Maureen Geiger at 444-0804 or mkgieger@sbcglobal.net.

RESULTS OF ARNHA WILDLIFE COUNT

Once again, 12 teams of intrepid birders gathered along the American River Parkway on Saturday, December 3, for the 27th Annual American River Natural History Association (ARNHA) Wildlife Count, established by Jack Hiehle in 1985. The count covers both sides of the American River, from Nimbus Dam to Discovery Park. Unexpectedly robust winds contributed to the relatively low numbers of bird species found. 108 species of birds were seen this year, compared with a record-setting 123 species in 2010 and 115 species in 2009. On the other hand, the outflow from the Nimbus Dam was only 2200 cubic feet per second, compared with last year's 6766 cu. ft./sec., which gave the shore birds and water fowl a better chance of being spotted this year.

Over 65 counters and their 12 Team Leaders scoured the water, land and air to find the usual suspects plus some mammal and bird species that are unusual in this area or at this time of year. Bird species included Yellow-headed Blackbird (first time on the list), Greater White-fronted Goose, Lesser Scaup, Horned Grebe, Cattle Egret, Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Sora, Wilson's Snipe, Say's Phoebe, and Rufous-crowned Sparrow. The sea lions made a return in greater numbers: 4 (compared to 1 last year). No coyotes were seen and the deer population appears to be down (52 compared with 70 last year, and 114 in 2009). The number of wild turkeys seen was also fewer than in past years.

The Team who counted the most bird species in their area was, again, the Falcons (7) who surveyed the Gristmill area on the south side of the American River, lead by Jeri Langham. The Team with the greatest percentage of change in numbers was the Otters (12) who surveyed the Sutter's Landing area for the 4th year under the leadership of Robert Sewell. Dan Williams' Hummingbirds (9) continue to impress with big numbers in their area on the south side of the American River from Watt Avenue to the Capital City Freeway. Closing in with another big improvement in count numbers this year was team 5, the Herons, lead by Gary Fregien, who surveyed the north side of the River in the Effie Yeaw/Ancil Hoffman area.

The results of the 2011 ARNHA Wildlife Count will be posted on the ARNHA website at http://www.arnha.org/images/ARNHA_Wildlife_Count_2011.pdf.

Lea Landry, Coordinator

Field Trip Findings

King Ranch/Lynch Canyon/American Canyon Wetlands (12/11) — Maureen Geiger, co-leader with Ken Poerner, reported: “Our Solano County trip to King Ranch, Lynch Canyon and American Canyon Wetlands was wonderful. Nine of us enjoyed raptor heaven including 4 Merlins, and an adult and first year Golden Eagle plus many kestrels, red-tails, harriers and also Loggerhead Shrikes. Rock Wrens were easy to find although we missed the Burrowing Owls. Good numbers of shorebirds rounded out the nice day.”

San Francisco Bay Birding (12/10) — Leader Scott Hoppe reported: “Six participants enjoyed sunny skies and calm to light winds for a very pleasant trip. Highlights included numerous Clapper Rails at Martin Luther King, Jr. Regional Shoreline. We had great views of several of them. Also, a Sora put in an appearance. Lots of waterfowl here as well. And many Common Yellowthroats, Marsh Wrens and Song Sparrows came out as the tide came in. An unexpected Merlin was also discovered, perched atop a utility pole. Later at Palo Alto Baylands, things started out a bit slow, but activity picked up as the tides receded. Highlights here included Peregrine Falcon and Bonaparte’s Gull. Two of the group had to drop out after this location, but the rest of us continued on to Lake Merritt in Oakland. Among the many waterfowl on the lake, we found at least 4 Barrow’s Goldeneyes, and a female Redhead. Unfortunately we could not locate the previously reported Tufted Duck. We tallied about 82 species over all. It was a great day of birding and everyone had a wonderful time.”

Colusa National Wildlife Area (12/8) — Leader Dan Tankersley reported: “Valerie Phillips, Gary Fregien and Anne Blandon joined me for a planned morning at the Colusa NWR. When we arrived at the observation deck about 9:50am, we immediately saw a drake Falcated Duck sitting on a small island about 45 meters from the deck. We enjoyed this bird for the remainder of the morning and into the afternoon when we finally took the auto tour loop and finished the day with 46 species. There were huge numbers of ducks and geese, all of which were greatly disturbed by the flyover of a Golden Eagle. Just another measure of excitement to a very memorable day.”

Gulls at Nimbus Fish Hatchery (12/4) — Leader Ed Harper reported: “The field trip got off to a good start with an adult Peregrine Falcon delighting the field trip participants while terrifying the White-throated Swifts that call the Hazel Ave. Bridge home. We were treated to great scope views of this very obliging Peregrine with a bulging crop. It is most likely the same bird that was present there last winter. With a good salmon run this year, gulls were numerous and we had a good study of five species of gulls. We could not locate a Mew Gull, but the other gull species provided a nice study with 1st cycle through adult birds cooperating for extended looks and careful study. The river was alive with ducks, too. Common Goldeneyes prevailed but there were several Barrow’s Goldeneyes and numerous Common Goldeneyes. Other species including Green Heron, Spotted Sandpiper, Belted Kingfisher, House Wren and many more all added to a very enjoyable morning and a great learning experience.”

Isenberg Crane Preserve/Cosumnes River Preserve Boardwalk (11/30) — Leader Dan Tankersley reported: “A group of six participants braved a foggy, cold and very windy early morning at the Isenberg Crane Preserve, and later a slightly warmer and sunny couple of hours at the Cosumnes River Preserve. Among the 44 species seen, the group observed 15 species of waterfowl including good numbers of Tundra Swan and many Greater White-fronted Geese. There were other interesting sightings as well, but all of us agreed the stars of the show were the Sandhill Cranes along Woodbridge Road. There were many present and very close to the road, which provided a great opportunity to watch the interactions and displaying within the family groups—an observation of which one never tires.”

Pleasants Valley Rd./Putah Creek (Solano Co.) (11/26) — Leader Gary Fregien reported: “On a foggy morn-

ing, seven birders traveled west to the Vacaville area, where we were met at our first stop on Pleasants Valley Road by two guest birders from Benicia and by clear, but chilly weather. Temperatures warmed throughout the day, becoming mild and pleasant. Everything pointed to a great day of birding, which it was. We traveled up Pleasants Valley Road to Lake Solano, birding by radio along the way. We then birded both the Lake Solano day-use area and campground. Next we ventured up to the Monticello Dam Overlook hoping for birds on Lake Berryessa and Putah Creek below the dam, but the brisk

cold wind soon chased us back downstream to look for the American Dipper, which we could not find this year. Some trip highlights and group favorites include the following species. Starting with a nice array of ducks, waders and raptors, we saw Wood Duck, Eurasian Wigeon (a first for this



Peregrine at Bodega Bay
Sharon Wisecarver

Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser and Common Merganser, Horned Grebe (also a first), American Bittern, Virginia Rail, Osprey, Sharpshinned Hawk, Golden Eagle and Merlin. Woodpeckers included Red-breasted Sapsucker and Downy Woodpecker. Flycatchers were best represented by a Say’s Phoebe; though the Black Phoebes far outnumbered it. The favorite corvid was the many Yellow-billed Magpies. A couple of Brown Creepers added enjoyment along the trail. Thrushes included Western Bluebird and Hermit Thrush; the latter providing amusement with their antics in and around the bushes. Cedar Waxwing and Phainopepla were seen in the tree tops—the Phainopepla whistling often. Yellow-rumped was the only warbler seen, but they were abundant. Sparrows included Lark, Fox and Song. Finally, American Goldfinches were seen in their subdued, but still beautiful winter plumage. The day’s tally was 80 species observed. Surprisingly, last year’s total was 81, even though last year’s weather included periods of hard, cold rain. For the record, not bragging rights, the leader remained in the area for the next two days and also saw: Ruddy Duck,

Findings continued on page 6

Field Trips



Pigeon Guillemot
Klrsen Munson

Field Trip Information

For questions regarding the trip or to check 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 trips through January 29th. For February trips call the scheduler Richard Barbieri, 761-1124, offleash56@yahoo.com.

Due to insurance requirements, Sacramento Audubon leaders are not allowed to organize ridesharing/carpools. Participants are, however, encouraged to voluntarily share rides. Any carpool arrangements are private agreements between the driver and the passengers. Drivers must carry adequate insurance coverage. Please be courteous 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.

Wednesday, January 4, 8am

Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge

Leaders: Tim Fitzer and Cathie LaZier

Tim: 870-5207, spskua2@comcast.net

Cathie: 457-6882

empid@earthlink.net

Join Tim and Cathie to look for the great flocks of ducks and geese that winter in the valley. There is a 3.7 mile driving route through the refuge and a great viewing platform as well. This trip will last into early afternoon, so bring lunch, drinks and warm clothes. We'll return through the Dunnigan Hills, a good area for raptors, Burrowing Owls and wintering sparrows. Meet at the Bel Air shopping center on Arena Blvd. From Sacramento, take I-5 north to Arena Blvd, go west (left) over the freeway. Take the first left, Duckhorn Rd, and then turn right into the parking area. We will meet on the north side of the parking lot between Wells Fargo and Golden 1. This is a good trip for newer birders and experienced birders alike. FRS radios are helpful on this trip. Please note that at the refuge there is a fee for each vehicle: either \$3 for a day pass, or a \$12 Refuge Annual Pass.

Saturday, January 7

1st Annual Kid's Christmas Bird Count

Cosumnes River Preserve

Contact: Maureen Geiger, 444-0804

mkgeiger@sbcglobal.net

See the write-up on page 1 and registration is limited, so contact Maureen for more information.

Saturday, January 7, 8am

Western Amador County

Leader: Gary Fregien 708-0636

calaveri.gary@gmail.com

Join Gary on a road trip to the Sierra foothills in Amador County, along Highway's

16, 124 and 49. The focus of the trip will be the rivers, ponds, reservoirs and back-country roads in the western Amador County area. 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 is a possibility of Red-naped and Red-breasted Sapsucker, Western Bluebird, Hermit and Varied Thrush, American, Lesser and Lawrence's Goldfinch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hutton's Vireo and a variety of flycatchers, sparrows and raptors that may be observed here. This trip also includes stops for waterfowl at ponds near Sutter Creek and Ione. We may also stop at Lake Camanche, where a day-use fee is charged. 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 Starbucks. This Folsom Blvd Raley's is between Howe Ave and Watt Avenue.

Sunday, January 8, 8am

Salt Springs Valley

Leader: Linda Pittman, 715-1876

pittman@frontiernet.net

This area is located in western Calaveras County about an hour and a half drive from Sacramento. The open valley and its lake are home to many wintering ducks, hawks, eagles, owls and grassland birds. This is a unique area you will not want to miss. The trip will last into the late afternoon so bring lunch, liquids, warm clothing and FRS radios. Meet in the parking lot immediately west of the Union 76 gas station in the Wal-Mart shopping center located on the west side of Hwy 99 at the Elk Grove Blvd exit.

Wednesday, January 11, 8:30am

Beal's Point, Folsom Lake

Leader: Margaret Martin, 599-0181

Martmargaret@hotmail.com

Join Margaret for a 1 to 2 mile morning walk at Beal's Point. A variety of oak woodland birds and wintering sparrows should be seen, and grebes, goldeneyes and mergansers will be on the lake. Phainopeplas and Rufous-crowned Sparrows are possibilities. Meet Margaret at the Raley's shopping center parking lot on the northwest corner of Douglas and Auburn-Folsom roads, in the area near the Animal Hospital and Goodwill, for voluntary carpooling into the park. Or you can meet the group at the Beal's Point parking lot (fee required). This is a great trip for beginning birders.

Saturday, January 14, 8am

Gray Lodge Wildlife Area

Leader: John York, 409-9276

sonofyork@att.net

Join John for a tour of this prime wintering area for ducks and geese. After Gray Lodge, we'll take the route back around the west side of the Sutter Buttes. This area is great for raptors and grassland birds including wintering sparrows. Bring lunch, liquids, and warm clothing. FRS radios and scopes are helpful if you have them. Meet in the Bel Air shopping center on Arena Blvd. From Sacramento, take I-5 north to Arena Blvd, go west (left) over the freeway. Take the first left, Duckhorn Rd, and then turn right into the parking area. We will meet on the north side of the parking lot between Wells Fargo and Golden 1. There is a \$4.00 per person charge at the wildlife area.

Field Trips continued on page 4

Saturday, January 14
Beginning Birder Field Trip
William Pond Park

These beginners' field trips are designed to introduce new birders to the fun of birding. Limited to 10 people per trip with 3 Audubon trip leaders, it's a low-key introduction to finding and identifying birds. Registration is required. Contact Cathie LaZier at empid@earthlink.net, 457-6882.

Sunday, January 15, 8am
Road 113, Robinson Road and Birds Landing Area
Leaders: Carla Barbaro and Tim Fitzer
Carla: 717-8808
Tim: 870-5207, spksua2@comcast.net

This is a great area for wintering Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks, Prairie Falcons, Merlins, curlews, possible Mountain Plovers, shrikes, and other interesting birds. Bring liquids, lunch, warm clothes, spotting scopes, and FRS radios if possible. Meet 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. This trip will last into the afternoon.

Wednesday, January 18, 8am
Discovery Park
Leader: Maureen Geiger, 444-0804
mkgieger@sbcglobal.net

This park at the confluence of the American and Sacramento Rivers is a great place for a winter walk. Join Maureen to look for wintering birds and resident species generally found in the park such as Red-shouldered Hawks and White-tailed Kites. Other possibilities include sparrows, woodpeckers and bluebirds. This will be a walking trip and end before noon. There are no restroom facilities along the way. On I-5 from downtown, take the Garden Highway exit and turn left/east onto Garden Highway. Take the first left onto Natomas Park Drive, and the first right onto Capital Park Drive. Parking is permitted on either side of the street, and we'll walk into the park. This is a great trip for beginners.

Saturday, January 21, 8am
Colusa National Wildlife Refuge
Leader: Dan Tankersley, 662-1290
dtankers@winfirst.com

The Colusa NWR is another great location in the Central Valley to view large waterfowl concentrations. There will be many

duck species and plenty of Snow, Ross's and Greater White-fronted Geese as well as other wetland birds. This refuge often provides an opportunity to view the elgasi race of the Greater White-fronted Goose. Eurasian Wigeon is often seen here as well. We can expect many raptors with the possibility of Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon. We will spend a good amount of time on the main viewing platform, and then take an easy walk on a level trail through a riparian forest next to the main viewing pond. We will then take the short auto tour to finish our outing. Be prepared for cold and damp weather. Weather permitting, there should be ample photo ops. Scopes and FRS radios will be helpful on this trip. Meet Dan at the Mace Blvd Park and Ride. From Sacramento, take I-80 to west to Mace Blvd (Exit #75); turn right (north) and then right again to the Park and Ride behind Ikeda's Market. We will meet on the south side of the parking lot in the row nearest the big round water tank. Rain, strong wind, or thick fog cancels. Bring snacks and liquids as the trip will end in the very late morning to very early afternoon.

Sunday, January 22, 8am
Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge
Leader: Andi Salmi, 691-7216
andisalmi@yahoo.com

Andi will be looking for the great flocks of ducks and geese that winter in the valley or stop to feed on their way further south. There is a 3.7 mile driving route and a great viewing platform as well. This trip will last into early afternoon, so bring lunch, drinks and warm clothes. This is a good trip for newer birders and experienced birders alike. FRS radios are helpful on this trip. Meet at the Bel Air shopping center on Arena Blvd. From Sacramento, take I-5 north to Arena Blvd, go west (left) over the freeway. Take the first left, Duckhorn Rd, and then turn right into the parking area. We will meet on the north side of the parking lot between Wells Fargo and Golden 1. Please note there is a fee for each vehicle at the refuge: either \$3 for a day pass, or a \$12 Refuge Annual Pass.

Tuesday, January 24, 9am
Yolo Wildlife Area
Leader: Marlene Ishihara, 635-9758
ishiM2000@comcast.net

A variety of duck species and shorebirds, as well as White-faced Ibis, Yellow-headed Blackbirds and American Bitterns are possible on this trip. Join Marlene in this great

area just 10 minutes from downtown. Peregrine Falcon and Northern Harriers may be seen overhead, and Savannah Sparrows and Horned Larks are visible on the road. This is a good trip for both beginners and experienced birders. Bring scopes and FRS radios if you have them. From Sacramento, take I-80 west, take the first exit (#78, E Chiles/Rd 32A) 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. If the bypass is closed due to flooding, the trip is canceled.

Saturday, January 28,
8am until about noon
Nimbus Fish Hatchery
Leader: Dan Kopp, 213-2791
rey_ality@hotmail.com

Sharpen your gull identification skills as this is a gathering place for a variety of gulls. Herring, Thayer's, Glaucous-winged, California, Ring-billed and Mew Gulls are all possibilities. Then we'll walk downstream looking for Hooded and Common Mergansers, Osprey and other raptors, Barrow's and Common Goldeneye, Spotted Sandpipers, White-throated Swifts, and a variety of the smaller woodland birds. Meet Dan in the Fish Hatchery parking lot off Hazel Avenue, north of Hwy 50. Scopes are helpful on this trip.

Sunday January 29, 8am
Western Placer County
Leader: Scott Hoppe, 835-8471
Email: shoppe01@earthlink.net

Western Placer County can often rival the great Wildlife Refuges in numbers and diversity of waterfowl, and it is also known for large concentrations of raptors. Besides the expected species, Eurasian Widgeon, Bald Eagle, Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks, Lewis's Woodpecker and Lapland Longspur are all possible. Join Scott for a full day of exploring this diverse area and bring liquids, lunch and FRS radios. Meet at Brookfield's Restaurant parking lot, 1817 Taylor Road, in Roseville. From Sacramento on I-80, take the Eureka Road offramp (Exit 105A) and continue straight through the signal light at Eureka Road and you'll be on Taylor Road. Turn left just past the Shell Station. Brookfield's is behind Shell.

Sunday, January 29, 3:30pm
Sandhill Cranes and Other Wintering

**Birds of the Sacramento Valley
A Save Our Sandhill Cranes-sponsored
trip**

Coordinator: Mike Savino, 446-1392

All information is the same as for the February 25th Sandhill Crane trip.

**Saturday, February 4, 7am to noon
Pine Hill Preserve**

**Leader: Chris Conard, 203-1610
conardc@gmail.com**

The Pine Hill Preserve near Cameron Park is made up of several habitat blocks to protect rare plants (pinchillpreserve.org). The habitat is a mix of oak woodland and chaparral, and with that comes a suite of birds a little different than those found on the Valley floor. If it is a sunny day, we may be treated to singing California Thrasher, Bewick's Wren, and possibly Sage Sparrow. Plan for up to three miles of walking with moderately steep grades to Pine Hill. Depending on rainfall prior to the trip, the Cameron Park unit may be a little muddy (red mud), or we might avoid it if too muddy. Steady rain cancels. Meet in the Raley's parking lot in El Dorado Hills. From Hwy 50 east take Exit #30B; turn right on El Dorado Hills Blvd and go north under the freeway to the shopping center on your right. Meet at the far north end of the parking lot.

**Sunday, February 5, 8am
Birding Yolo County**

**Leader: Scott Hoppe, 835-8471
shoppe01@surewest.net**

Join Scott in this birding trip exploring Yolo County. This is an incredibly diverse area, and we will be visiting many of the "hotspots". Expect to see many wetland birds, as well as raptors and passerines. And Scott can help with those difficult Gull ID challenges. Scopes and FRS radios are helpful on this trip. Meet Scott 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.

**Saturday, February 11, 8am
Buck's Creek Trail/Serrano Parkway,
El Dorado Hills**

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

Join Maureen for a leisurely walk through this riparian habitat and look for resident birds such as woodpeckers, nuthatches, towhees, wrens, bluebirds and marsh birds, as well as possible winter warblers and sparrows. River otters are a possibility. Last year

a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker showed up! Meet for coffee at 7:30 in the coffee shop inside the Raley's supermarket in the shopping center on El Dorado Hills Boulevard just off Highway 50. From Hwy 50 east take Exit #30B; turn right on El Dorado Hills Blvd and go north under the freeway to the Raley's shopping center on your right. The group will leave for birding by 8am sharp.

**Sunday, February 12, 7:30am
Yuba County Wetlands**

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

Streams and rivers draining from the foothills to the valley and farmers' irrigation help to create these wetlands and winter habitat on surrounding properties. Join Richard on a trip to one of his favorite places to bird while he looks for ducks, geese, shorebirds, and birds of prey. 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 15, 8am
The Best of Both Sides!
River Bend Park and William Pond
Park**

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

Meet Cathie at the main River Bend parking lot near the bike bridge. (Follow the main road into the park; after you cross the bike trail (stop sign) go about 1/2 mile and turn left at the sign "rafting exit, main picnic area" and continue on the road to the large parking area). For the first half of the walk we'll bird across the bridge into William Pond Park, going downstream along the backwaters of the river and checking out the fishing pond. Then we'll recross the river and go upstream into the oak woodland area. We'll finish before noon, and since our cars will be at the developed portion of the park you may want to bring snacks to enjoy at one of the picnic tables at the end of the trip. As always, this is a great trip for beginners. From Folsom Blvd, between Bradshaw and Mather Field Road, take Rod Beaudry Drive north into the park, (formerly called Goethe Park). If you come from the William Pond side look for us on the bridge. A Sac County Park Pass or \$5 entry fee is required for all vehicles.

**February 17 through 20
Great Backyard Bird Count
www.birdsource.org/gbbc**

Count birds for 15 minutes or more in your backyard or other favorite birding locale; then post your results online and see what's happening in your area and across the country. It's fun for all ages and skill levels. See the article on page 6 and check the website for more information.

**Saturday, February 18
Family Friendly Trip
Leader: Sandra Beseler
Location to be determined**

These family trips require pre-registration and fill up quickly. Register for trips by contacting Maureen Geiger, at mkgeiger@sbcglobal.net, or 444-0804.

**February 18, 19 and 20,
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.

**Saturday, February 25, 8:30am
Winter Raptors and Waterfowl
Gray Lodge and Sutter Buttes area
Leader: Don Schmoldt, 739-6465
Bajaowl@gmail.com**

Meet at 8:30am at the gas station/market at the corner of Hwy 20 and Acacia Road, approximately 7 miles west of Yuba City. To reach Yuba City drive north on I-5 and SR-99, then west on Hwy 20. Hard rain cancels. In the morning we will drive around Sutter Buttes on Pass Road, West Butte Road and North Butte Road looking for raptors (Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Prairie Falcon, and Merlin are possible, as well as Mountain Bluebird and Lewis' Woodpecker). We will have lunch at Gray Lodge and spend the afternoon walking the trails and driving around the tour loop looking for Blue-winged Teal and Eurasian Wigeon, and to enjoy the winter waterfowl show. Bring water, snacks and lunch. There is a port-a-potty at the gas station, but there are NO other restrooms on this trip until we get to

Field Trips continued on page 7

INVEST IN A BIRDY FUTURE FOR KIDS' SAKE!

Sacramento Audubon currently has a small but popular program offering families an opportunity to take their children birding. Leaders pick a local birding spot, and treat parents and their kids to birds and nature up close and personal to see what the sport of birding is really like. Mostly these families just want a chance to get their kids away from the computer games, TV and cell phones and outside in the fresh air in pretty surroundings. But some of these children will be hooked on birds as many of us have been and become birders now or later in their lives.

Currently, we offer 8 trips a year and, in January, the first Christmas Bird Count for kids. Each trip is about 2 hours long (from meeting everyone to getting back to the cars) and is offered the third weekend of the month September through May. Two leaders are the minimum needed for a maximum of 10 children per trip.

We need help! This program is in jeopardy. The very small cadre of dedicated leaders who are willing to help with this cannot do 8 trips a year. We need more people willing to spend a max of 3 hours a weekend morning a couple times a year to show kids what birding is about. If this worthy endeavor appeals to you, call Maureen Geiger at 444-0804 or mkgeiger@sbcglobal.net.

In Memorium JOHN SCHICK

John B. Schick, 65, who led monthly bird census walks at Cosumnes River Preserve for more than two decades, died unexpectedly in early December. A beloved law professor at Humphreys College, Stockton, he was found dead of apparent natural causes at his home December 6, according to the *Stockton Record*.

Schick, formerly a prominent criminal defense attorney, led Cosumnes Preserve surveys for at least 23 years. In recent years they were conducted for several miles along the Cosumnes River. He sent census reports to National Audubon for inclusion in global surveys of species counts.

BIRD AND BREAKFAST: SATURDAY, MARCH 10TH, 2012 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 Assembly Building at the Nature Center in Ancil Hoffman Park, California Avenue 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 event, and it sometimes fills quickly. Charge is \$35 per person and it's a fund-raiser for educational programs on the American River Parkway. You can call the center at (916) 489-4918 and register using a credit card or just come by and register at the front desk.

THE 15TH ANNUAL GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT! FEBRUARY 17-20, 2012!

The Great Backyard Bird Count is coming up next month from February 17-20. It's one of the best opportunities for citizen science to contribute to our knowledge of bird species' survival and population. Plus, it's a great opportunity for some healthy competition in compiling those checklists. Last year California was 5th nationwide in submitting the most checklists and 2nd in the number of species reported, behind Texas. As you may have remarked while out birding, coots are really taking over, turning up as California's most populous species in last year's count. Sacramento was #1 in California with 128 checklists and third in the state, behind San Diego and Napa, with the number of species.

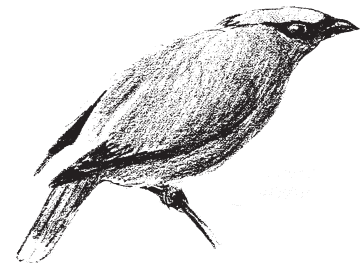
The object of the GBBC is to count all the birds you see in your backyard (or chosen location) in 15 minutes. You can do this any time during the 4 days or once each day. You then record it at the GBBC website. Pretty easy and pretty fun, especially since the results are almost live and you can track results throughout the weekend. The GBBC website is quite interactive and found at www.birdsource.org/gbbc/. There's a photo contest every year too. Let's get everyone out counting this year and add to Sacramento's birdy reputation!

Findings continued from page 2

Peregrine Falcon, White-throated Swift (200+), Lewis's Woodpecker, Hutton's Vireo, Steller's Jay, Wrentit, California Thrasher and a sparrow thought to be a Brewer's (if it would just stay still!)."

Upper Sunrise Area, American River Parkway (11/20) — Leader Wayne Blunk reported: "A small group of five enjoyed a short walk of an hour and a half up river and back from the Fair Oaks Bridge. A small species list of 22 but we had great looks at both male and female Downy Woodpeckers and Belted Kingfishers. A Nuttall's Woodpecker, Common Goldeneyes and Common Mergansers were the other highlights. Good company enjoying birding."

Pete Hayes



Cedar Waxwing
Kirsten Munson

PRE PURCHASED PASSES NOW REQUIRED FOR DFG LANDS

Beginning in October a Department of Fish and Game Lands pass is required to access DFG-managed lands where a fee is required for non-hunting recreational purposes, such as bird watching, hiking, etc. A DFG Lands Pass is not required for any person who possesses a valid California sport fishing, hunting, or trapping license. Passes must be redeemed at the point of entry for an entry permit. Passes are not area-specific and can be used to access any of the following DFG-managed lands which require a fee:

- Gray Lodge Wildlife Area
- Grizzly Island Wildlife Area
- Los Banos Wildlife Area
- San Jacinto Wildlife Area
- Imperial Wildlife Area (Wister Unit)
- Elkhorn Slough Ecological Reserve
- Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve

The passes can be purchased online at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/landpass/> or call the regional office for Sacramento at 358-2900 for more information.

SAS OUTREACH

Upcoming events include the Galt Winter Bird Festival in January as well as some Earth Day events in spring. If you'd like to come and help us, contact Cathie LaZier at empid@earthlink.net.

FIELD TRIPS FOR BEGINNING BIRDERS 2012

Location: William Pond Park on the American River

Dates, (all Saturdays): January 14, February 11 and March 10

Time: 8am, ending by noon

Each Trip Limited to 10 participants: Registration required.

These outings are geared toward people who aren't entirely comfortable joining field trips as well as those who have birded a bit but would like to be better birders. A brief parking lot talk will focus on choice and use of binoculars and a brief overview of birding etiquette and ethics. A \$5 donation is requested to cover the costs of hand-out materials. (If you're a repeat participant and already have the materials no donation is requested.) You do not need to be a member of Audubon to participate.

The field trips will focus on finding and identifying common birds in a variety of habitats and will be led by two or more experienced Sacramento Audubon trip leaders. Register via email to Cathie at empid@earthlink.net, (put "Beginning Birder" in the subject line), and give your name, phone number, email address and the field trip date of your choice, or by calling Cathie at (916) 457-6882 and leaving your name and phone number. Following registration you will receive additional information regarding the field trip.

FAMILY FRIENDLY TRIPS

Saturday, February 18, location to be determined

Saturday, March 17, Mather Lake

These monthly birding and nature walks are specifically geared to and appropriate for families and children. There is a trip limit to ensure a quality experience for all. Register for trips by contacting Maureen Geiger, at mkgeiger@sbcglobal.net, or 444-0804.

Field Trips continued from page 5

Gray Lodge! There is a \$4.00 per person fee at Gray Lodge, and you will need exact change for the iron ranger.

**Saturday, February 25, 3:30pm
Sandhill Cranes and Other Wintering Birds of the Sacramento Valley
A Save Our Sandhill Cranes-sponsored trip**

Coordinator: Mike Savino, 446-1392

This is the last weekend of the Sandhill Crane trips, before they begin their migration. Meet at the Cosumnes River Preserve Visitor Center deck at 3:30pm to hear a brief presentation of Sandhill Crane behavior, biology and status. Then we'll stroll the boardwalk in the Lost Slough Wetlands, enjoying views of the cranes, wintering waterfowl and shorebirds. Afterwards, we'll drive along Desmond Road and possibly to Woodbridge Road or Staten Island, to see flocks of cranes fly in to roost for the night. Dress for changeable weather and bring binoculars. Scopes are helpful. 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. This is a great trip for beginners.

**Sunday, February 26,
7am-mid afternoon**

**Northern San Joaquin County
Leader: Linda Pittman, 715-1876
pittman@frontiernet.net**

Join Linda for a visit to diverse habitats in northern San Joaquin County. The Mokelumne River Day Use area and fish hatchery below Camanche Dam is a mix of oak woodland, riverine, and riparian habitat. This area has recently hosted Bald

Eagle, Lewis's Woodpeckers and American Dipper. Flood and Waverly Roads are excellent for raptors and other open country birds. Be prepared for about a mile of walking. Bring lunch, layered clothes, and scopes and FRS radios if you have them. Meet at the Raley's Shopping Center on Twin Cities Road just east of Hwy 99 in Galt near the It's A Grind Coffee Shop (10420 Twin Cities Rd). This trip is good for both beginners and more experienced birders.

**Sunday, February 26, 3:30pm
Sandhill Cranes and Other Wintering Birds of the Sacramento Valley
A Save Our Sandhill Cranes-sponsored trip**

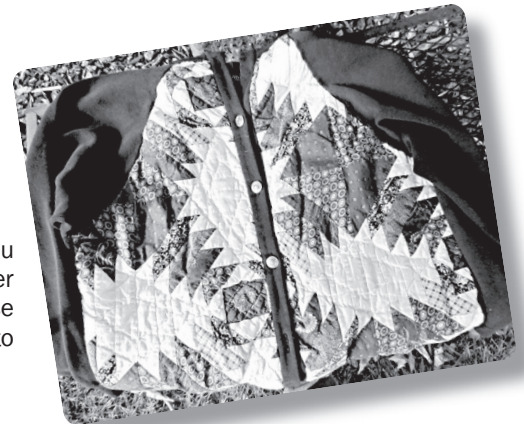
Coordinator: Mike Savino, 446-1392

This is the last Sandhill Crane trip of the season, so if you haven't been to see them this year, be sure to join this trip. See details for February 25th.

**Tuesday, February 28, 9am
Yolo Wildlife Area**

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

Join Marlene in this great area 10 minutes from downtown Sacramento. Depending on the extent of flooded fields on the auto tour route, there may be good numbers of 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 and FRS radios are helpful on this trip which is good for both beginners and more experienced birders. Note: trip will be canceled if bypass is closed due to flooding.



This jacket was found at Effie Yeau Nature Center after the September SAS meeting. If it's yours please call Sally Walters at 710-1077 to claim it.

Birding and Nature Events

16TH ANNUAL MORRO BAY WINTER BIRD FESTIVAL

Morro Bay's 16th Annual Winter Bird Festival will be held **January 13-16, 2012**. Located on California's scenic Central Coast, Morro Bay is an area recognized worldwide for its diversity of both resident and wintering birds, and at last year's festival, over 200 species of birds were identified! To register and for more information about the Festival, check their website at www.morrobaybirdfestival.org.

5TH ANNUAL WINTER BIRD FESTIVAL

The City of Galt in Collaboration with the Cosumnes River Preserve and Galt Joint Union Elementary School District are pleased to bring you the 5th Annual Winter Bird Festival, Saturday, **January 28, 2012**. Many migratory and resident birds call Galt their winter home. Guided tours offer an exciting opportunity to see the winter birds that call the Central Valley home! Wetlands, songbird and sandhill crane tours are included so hop on a bus and have your binoculars ready! Questions! Call 209-366-7115 or google Galt Birding Festival for more detailed information.

SNOW GOOSE FESTIVAL OF THE PACIFIC FLYWAY

The 13th Annual Snow Goose Festival will be held in Chico on **January 26-29, 2012**. This year's festival offers over 65 fieldtrips and workshops including fun, FREE kids activities. It also hosts a Pacific Flyway Art Exhibit and Saturday night's banquet keynote speaker will be Greg Miller, famed birder portrayed by Jack Black in the newly released movie, *The Big Year*. Registration and further information can be found at snowgoosefestival.org or by email at info@snowgoosefestival.org and phone (530) 345-1865

BIRDS OF WINTER IN THE SACRAMENTO VALLEY

Ed Harper, long time educator, tour guide, and noted birder of the Sacramento area, will help you learn the finer points of identification, natural history, and calls of the many species of birds resident in winter throughout the Sacramento region. By way of a series of lectures with beautiful photography and field trips, both beginning and experienced birders can improve their knowledge and skills.

Whereas some species of birds such as swallows, flycatchers, and warblers do

migrate south for the winter, many more birds flock to the Sacramento region to spend the winter. Cranes, ducks, geese, gulls, raptors, kinglets, and sparrows are just a few of the many representative groups found during this exciting season. Whether you simply want to distinguish one sparrow species from another or seek help in learning the distinctive "chuck" note of a Hermit Thrush, this course has broad appeal. Anyone who has a serious interest in birds and enjoys their presence in our world can profit from this class.

Lectures

Time: Thursdays, 7-8:30pm

Dates: February 23, March 8, and March 22

Place: Effie Yeaw Nature Center in Ancil Hoffman Park, American River Parkway

Fee: \$80 for all lectures and field trips. Pre-registration is required.

Call Effie Yeaw Nature Center at 489-4918 to register.

More information at www.sacnaturecenter.net

Field Trips

Saturday Feb 25, 8am-noon, Ancil Hoffman Park

Saturday March 10, 7:30am-1:30pm, Linden Raptor Route

Saturday March 24, 8am-noon, Yolo Basin Wetlands

Effie Yeaw Nature Center 916-489-4918

California Avenue and Tarshes Drive, Carmichael, CA 95608

SACRAMENTO AUDUBON 2012 PROGRAMS

February 16	Garry George, <i>Audubon California and Renewable Energy</i>
March 15	David Carle, <i>Around the World Starting at Mono Lake</i>
April 19	TBD
May 17	Julie Serences, <i>Native Bees in Our Yards</i>

SPECIAL ANIMAL HOUSE ART SHOW AND CONCERT

The annual Animal House art show running from February 21 through March 10, will feature art from all media: painting, sculpture, mixed media, photography and fabric art. It is all animal themed art and there is a special youth category (ages 17 and under). There will be over 200 entries and a gala reception on March 10, the annual 2nd Saturday Animal House reception, at which awards will be presented at the Sacramento Fine Arts Center. There will be great food and drink, live music, and, of course, wonderful animal art from a wide variety of media. The reception will be co-sponsored by the Sacramento SPCA, the **Sacramento Audubon Society**, and the Carmichael Park and Recreation District. The SPCA's lovable dogs-up-for-adoption will be there, prominent painters will demonstrate their skills, and the Animal House artists will discuss their work with the guests.

One week following the reception, on March 17, the Sacramento Fine Arts Center will present a special concert never before performed in the Sacramento region. The Dave Brubeck Institute Jazz Band and the Poet Laureate of Sacramento, Bob Stanley, along with eight other prominent poets, will present works inspired by the art at the Center's annual Animal House show.

The musicians and poets will choose art entered in the Center's fabulous animal themed art classic that inspires their creativity, compose the music and poetry and combine that with the art and artists at the Center's beautiful galleries in Carmichael. The concert, co-sponsored by the Sacramento Poetry Center and the Sacramento Fine Arts Center, will begin at 7pm. The galleries are located at 5330-B Gibbons Drive, Carmichael. Tickets are \$10 in advance, \$15 at the door. Please call (916) 971-3713 to reserve tickets. Space is limited to 150 guests.

SAS NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to this
new members:

Larry Burnham

Jaye Cook

Hisako Hintz

Judy Hirano

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!

Thanks to the following for their generous donations:

Pablo Garza, Lachlan McClenahan, Daniel Straight, to the **General Fund**.

Joellen Arnold, Hisako Hintz, Richard Howard, Fred Klass, Judith Lamare, Jane Taylor, Don Schmoldt and Sally Walters, Michael Vecchio, to the **Conservation and Education Fund**.

The Sacramento Audubon Society was remembered in the will of William S. Venables, a longtime Audubon member who passed away in December.

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 on January 31, 2012 at 7pm at the SMUD Building, 6301 S Street, Sacramento.

YOUR DUES AND DONATIONS AT WORK!

In the first half of the fiscal year the Sacramento Audubon Society Board has voted to make the following donations.

\$1000 to the **Central Valley Birding Club Symposium**

\$200 to an **inner city primary school** to fund nature outings

\$50 to the **Burrowing Owl Conservation Network**

\$500 to **Habitat 2020**, the conservation arm of ECOS

\$404 towards costs of the **Bufferlands 2012 calendar** (free copies available to SAS members on the Christmas Counts and at the January general meeting).

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

llandry46@earthlink.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

Red Fox Sparrow found singing in north Davis on 11/25 and continuing into December, and at least two different **Lapland Longspurs** found in a field north of Rd 27, between Rds 102 and 102B, from 11/17 through the end of the month.

We feature photos of some of the highlight birds on the Sacramento Audubon Web site (sacramentoaudubon.org/activities/recent sightings.html).

Many of these reports first appeared on the Central Valley Bird Club Listserve. Visit cvbirds.org and click "Listserve" 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:

Todd Easterla, Steve Hampton, Cliff Hawley, Dan Kopp, Sami LaRocca, Michael Perrone, John Sterling, Zach Smith, Magill Weber, Dan Welsh, and Dan Williams.

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

Chris Conard

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.

Seasonal Observations

November 1 to November 30

Rare and Unusual Bird Reports

www.cvbirds.org/ListServ.htm

Despite decades of observation, it is quite remarkable that new species are added to the state, the Central Valley, and the local counties each year. The most recent example is a bit different, since it was assisted by the 2010 AOU split of "Winter Wren" into three species: **Eurasian Wren**, **Pacific Wren**, and **Winter Wren** (or "Eastern" Winter Wren). Pacific Wren is the regular breeding bird along the coast and in the mountains of California, which regularly winters in small and varying numbers in dense riparian forest at sites like the Cosumnes River Preserve (CRP). On 11/27, a **Winter Wren** (looking and sounding like a bird from eastern North America) was recorded at CRP. This was at a remote site without regular public access, but recordings of the call and video were obtained, which can be viewed at the Web link below. If accepted by the California Bird Records Committee, this would be a first for the Central Valley and one of a handful so far for the state.

Among the best finds of the month were an **American Golden-Plover** and a **Pacific Golden-Plover** at the Farmer's Central Pond of Rd 102, south of Woodland, on 11/4. The former was refound on 11/5. A juvenile sapsucker was seen in downtown Sacramento on 11/2. Only **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** are known to retain juvenile plumage into the fall and away from their natal grounds, so it would appear to be that species by default. A **Sage Sparrow**

Sacramento Audubon Society
11054 Autumnwind Lane
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670-4224

Address Correction Requested

Dated Material: Please Expedite Delivery

Nonprofit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Permit #1297
Sacramento, CA

(interior type) was discovered on private property at Sherman Island on 11/7.

Fortunately, limited access was obtained and the bird was seen through 11/22.

In addition to the expected chaparral species, a ten-mile hike up Rayhouse Rd on 11/27 produced 75 **Band-tailed Pigeons**, four **Northern Pygmy-Owls**, four **Hairy Woodpeckers**, 20 **Purple Finches**, and four **Thick-billed Fox Sparrows**. The latter birds, of the type breeding in the mountains of California, are rarely detected in our area. Additional birds of note include the continuing **Brown Pelican** in West Sacramento, a **White-winged Dove** in Solano County at Birds Landing and Montezuma Hills Rds on 11/17, 65 **Band-tailed Pigeons** coming to Putah Creek for water at the Hwy 128 Bridge below Monticello Dam on 11/18, a **Short-eared Owl** along Desmond Rd at CRP on 11/5 (there have been few recent Sacramento County reports), the continuing **Black-throated Sparrow** in Esparto, an apparent

Sacramento Audubon Society Information

Correspondence: P.O. Box 160694, Sacramento, CA 95816-0694

Internet Address: www.sacramentoaudubon.org

Membership/Subscriptions: Lea Landry, 11054 Autumnwind Lane
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670
638-1141, e-mail preferred: llandry46@earthlink.net

Seasonal Observations: Chris Conard, 2405 Rio Bravo Circle,
Sacramento, CA 95826
203 1610, e-mail preferred: conardc@gmail.com

Editor: Sharon Wisecarver, e-mail, 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.

The Observer is published monthly January through December, except June and August, by the Sacramento Audubon Society.

Observations continued on page 9