

The Observer

Sacramento Audubon Society



VOLUME 69 • NO. 1

JANUARY 2017

General Meeting

Thursday, January 19, 2017
Effie Yeaw Nature Center
Assembly Room, 7pm

Things that Sting and Bite
Mike Caldwell

Mike Caldwell will be speaking about northern California's venomous animals – those few creatures capable of causing medically-significant injuries in people. An award-winning photographer, Mike will use a vividly-illustrated presentation to explain which animals are truly dangerous, how to recognize them, symptoms of envenomation, and proper first aid. He will also bust a few common myths in the process.

Mike has been lecturing and writing about venomous creatures for more than forty years. He has authored many articles for both technical and non-technical publications and is co-editor of *The Biology of Rattlesnakes*, a 600-page peer-reviewed compilation of research from 90 contributors. Mike has taught bites and stings in two paramedic programs, been invited to speak at national conferences of the Wilderness

Medical Society, and recently served on a national panel that revised the treatment guidelines for North American pitviper bites. He has been radio-tracking rattlesnakes for fifteen years, including the only long-term field study of the notorious Mohave Rattlesnake in the southern California desert. Mike holds an M.S. degree in biology.

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. To keep up with current happenings follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/SacramentoAudubon](https://www.facebook.com/SacramentoAudubon).

Sally Walters Schmoldt, President and Program Chair



Black Widow spider

WHAT'S THE GBBC!

2017 is the 20th annual Great Backyard Bird Count!

DO YOU HAVE A BACKYARD? You can really be anywhere.

DO YOU HAVE 15 MINUTES? You can really count all day.

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO COUNT? This is actually necessary.

If you answered yes to those very easy questions mark your calendars for **February 17–20, 2017**. Go to the birdcount.org site for further count information and take part in an exciting and valuable citizen science project. People from all over the world take part. Be one of them!

2017, 5th Annual Sacramento Kids' Christmas Count

Saturday–Sunday, January 7-8

Since Maureen Geiger began the SAS Kid's CBC count 5 years ago it has grown and grown. It started as a one day event and grew steadily in participants. This year it is a two day event with children and teens and has over 60 participants. Sign-ups had to be taken and all spaces are full. So hats off to Maureen for starting this event and a big thank-you to all the SAS volunteers who lead field trips and help with parking, sign-in, raffles and refreshments. What a success!

WINTER BIRD FESTIVAL IN GALT

The City of **Galt** in collaboration with the Cosumnes River Preserve and Galt Joint Union Elementary School District are pleased to bring you the 10th Annual Winter Bird Festival, **Saturday, January 21, 2017**. Many migratory and resident birds call Galt their winter home. The key note speaker will be David Allen Sibley, Ornithologist/Illustrator and author of *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. Google 'Galt Birding Festival' for more detailed information. Registration for the annual festival is already open so check online or call so you don't miss any of your favorite tours. If you have any questions please call 209-366-7115.

BIRD AND BREAKFAST AT EFFIE YEAW, MARCH 18-19

Bird and Breakfast - Traditional Event -- Saturday, March 18 at 8am

Bird and Bagels - Family-Friendly Event -- Sunday, March 19 at 8am

The American River Natural History Association (ARNHA) and Sacramento Audubon are once again teaming up to offer a special weekend of morning birding trips coupled with wonderful breakfast fare.

This event starts with Bird Walks guided by some of our best local birders. After birding everyone is treated to a great breakfast. On Sunday there is a special walk for family's with children.

Bird and Breakfast Weekend often sells out. Reservations are required. Call 489-4918 for information, questions and to make reservations or register online at www.sacnaturecenter.net/birdandbreakfast.html.

Field Trip Findings

Humbug Creek (12/14) — Leader Deb Weston reported: “It was overcast, but the temps were very mild for the six of us to enjoy our walk around Humbug Creek. It was a first time visit for most to this beautiful area of Folsom. The pond had two Common Goldeneye, one lone female Bufflehead and a Gallinule. Other species of note were at least two Downy Woodpecker, many California Quail and several Northern Flickers seen and heard. A total of 33 species seen.”

Bobelaine (12/11) — Leader Maureen Geiger reported: “Bobelaine on a very foggy day still managed to produce 42 species plus 2 other taxa. Eighteen intrepid birders walked to the river overlook and back again. A singing Fox Sparrow was a nice treat as were several others on the river, a Red-breasted Sapsucker and a Myrtle Yellow-rumped Warbler. The recent rains raised the level of the Feather River by a surprising amount compared to the last trip there a month ago.”

Nimbus Hatchery (12/10) — Leader Craig DeMartini reported: “Trip was rained out.”

Glen Hall Park (12/7) — Leader Dan Williams, substituting for Sally Walters Schmoltdt reported: “5 of us enjoyed a lovely morning walk under partly cloudy skies and brisk temps. The raptors pretty well stole the show with gorgeous scope views of a male Merlin, a couple of Red-shouldered Hawks, a Sharp-shinned Hawk, and at least 2 different Ospreys patrolling up and down the river. On the river were several Common Goldeneyes, a few Buffleheads, and a lovely pair of Hooded Mergansers. What I assume was the same Glaucous-winged Gull that shows up for the ARNHA count for me every year was in its usual spot, and a Spotted Sandpiper made an appearance along the shore as well. We enjoyed examining several flickers through the scope, parsing out the intergrade individuals with mixed Red and Yellow-shafted traits. The cold songbirds were a little reluctant to show themselves but nevertheless we were able to track down a few Lincoln’s and Fox Sparrows, Spotted Towhees, a Hermit Thrush, and an Orange-crowned Warbler. At least 2 mewing Blue-gray Gnatcatchers only afforded us fleeting views as they flitted through the willows. 2 croaking ravens flying west toward Business 80 were a bit of a surprise. All

told we had 60 species in a little less than 3 hours.”

Mather Lake Family Friendly trip (12/4) — Leader David Rosen reported: “Due to the CA International Marathon, there were road closures on the north/south streets that intersect Fair Oaks Blvd. We waited in the parking lot until about 9:50 to give those running late a chance to get there. A few folks showed up a little late as a result of detours. While waiting for everyone to arrive, we made good use of our time by discussing binoculars, scopes, field guides, and smart phone apps for the benefit of those who were new to birding. Once everybody was there, we walked around to the south side of Mather Lake. It was a great group of participants of all ages and levels of birding experience. Eight-year-old Travis was able to identify many of the birds we were seeing, as well as imitate them with his own bird calls. Young ladies, Sophie and Olivia, also had a good birding background thanks to their mom Lynne. Seventh-grader, Mason, was well equipped with binoculars and attending the walk for credit in his science class. As is often the case on bird walks, we didn’t walk very far because we were frequently stopping and peering through the spotting scope and talking about the birds we were seeing. However, during the brief two hours of our walk, everybody seemed pleased with the number of birds we saw and the great looks at many through the scope.”

Nimbus Hatchery (12/4) — Leader Ed Harper reported: “With a leisurely 9:30 am start to the day, 22 birders showed up to spend some time working on gull identification. Gulls were upstaged at the start of the trip by great scope views of a Peregrine Falcon feasting on a hapless White-throated Swift. But the gulls did not disappoint us as 5 species of different age classes were studied at length. California and Herring Gulls were the most numerous, followed by Ring-billed Gull, Glaucous-winged Gull, and “Thayer’s” Gull with 2 or 3 juveniles of the latter being observed. Next year this species will most likely see a change in name to Iceland Gull and simply be regarded as a subspecies. The bird of the day, however, was a female Greater Scaup. Quite unusual on the American River, the bird was scoped and photographed at length. To add to the drama

near the end of the trip, an adult Bald Eagle flying downstream past our group perched obligingly for marvelous views. The fine weather and fantastic participants added the punctuation mark to the trip.”

Sacramento Bypass (11/28) — Leader Maureen Geiger reported: “The Sacramento Bypass was a new location for a SAS field trip, and it was definitely worth the time. Six intrepid birders in spite of a fair amount of mud managed excellent looks at more than 40 species of birds. Because of the rain, we concentrated on birding by ear. In addition, a Merlin, a Great Horned Owl, and good-sized flocks of American Pipits, Golden-crowned Sparrows and Western Meadowlarks were seen.”

Sandhill Crane trips (11/26 and 27) — Leader Mike Savino reported: “On 11/26 in spite of the rain and overcast 12 people came out to see the Sandhill cranes which did not disappoint. After a brief talk at the Cosumnes River Preserve we drove down to Woodbridge Road and, just before sunset, saw hundreds of cranes fly in for the night. Many of our guests were treated to wonderful scope views of cranes. On 11/27 the improved weather seemed to have encouraged visitors to come out because we had 22 people join our crane viewing tour. We followed the same procedure as yesterday but this time, when we caravaned down to Woodbridge, the visibility was much improved. We not only saw about 500 cranes, but a wide array of ducks, geese and other waterfowl were visible. A Northern Harrier flew a few low passes over the shore birds and ducks. Luckily about a dozen cranes landed close enough to get spectacular scope views. When we first arrived there was not one crane to be seen. That set up the dramatic impact when hundreds of cranes finally arrived. After it started to get dark we saw what appeared to be a rather large, white feral cat moving slowly through the wet grass between us and the birds.”

William Pond Park (11/27) — Cathie LaZier, co-leader with Darrell Mohr and Craig DeMartini reported: “Today’s group was a step up from beginners, and did an excellent job of spotting a variety of birds. We had good looks at river and pond birds, but missed some common

Findings continued on page 7

Field Trips

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, for trips through January 22nd contact the scheduler Tim Fitzer, spskua2@comcast.net, 870-5207. For trips from January 23rd contact the scheduler Richard Barbieri, offleash56@yahoo.com, 761-1124.

Due to insurance requirements, Sacramento Audubon leaders are not allowed to organize ride-sharing/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. In case of INCLEMENT WEATHER contact the trip leader for trip status.



Horned-Lark
Linda Pittman

Sunday, January 1, 9am New Year's Day, Family Friendly Trip Cosumnes River Preserve Leader: Tim Fitzer, 870-5207 Spskua2@comcast.net

Start the New Year off right; go birding! Wintering Sandhill Cranes, Greater White-fronted Geese and a wide variety of duck species frequent the preserve. Yellowlegs and Wilson's Snipe will be in the shallower water, and other shorebirds are possible. Tim will walk along the wetland ponds, stopping at the "Ducks In Scopes" activity and then going out to the boardwalk viewing area. Meet at the CRP Visitor Center parking lot. Bring water and snacks and dress for changeable weather. This is an enjoyable trip for everyone, and beginners and families are welcome. 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.

Wednesday, January 4, 9am Glenn Hall Park, Paradise Beach American River Parkway Leader: Sally Walters Schmoldt 710-1077, bajaowl@gmail.com

Sally birds this area regularly, and she'll be leading a field trip here the first Wednesday of every month. Joining her in the different months will give you a good idea of the seasonal changes along the parkway. From Highway 50 take Howe Ave north to Fair Oaks Blvd. Turn left onto Fair Oaks and cross over the American River. Turn right on Carlson Ave, which is the first stop light past the American River bridge. Continue on Carlson Ave to its end at Glenn Hall Park. Meet on top of the levee. This will be

a fairly easy walk, ending about 11am, but expect some uneven terrain, gravel, sand, and rock cobble. This is an excellent trip for beginners.

Friday, January 6, 8am Mather Lake Leader: Mark Sawyer, 968-1661 MarkSawyer3383@yahoo.com

Mather Lake is one of our most popular birding locations, with quite a list of bird species. Join Mark to look for a nice variety of resident and migrant birds. Possibilities include White-tailed Kites, American Bittern, Green Heron, Pied-billed Grebe and Common Yellowthroat. If you bring your camera Mark may give you some photography tips as well. Meet in the parking lot of Mather Regional Park; from Highway 50, go south on Zinfandel about 2-1/2 miles. After crossing Douglas Blvd take the first left into the park area. There is a \$5 per car entrance fee; your Sac County Parkway pass is valid here. This is a wonderful trip for beginning birders.

Saturday, January 7, 7:30am Gray Lodge SWR and Colusa NWR Leaders: Daniel and Pam Thompson, 359-3777, keiran@surewest.net

Join Pam and Daniel for a tour of this prime wintering area for ducks and geese. After Gray Lodge, they'll take the route back around the west side of the Sutter Buttes, looking for Sandhill Cranes, raptors and grassland birds, and then stop at the Colusa NWR viewing platform. 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 \$4.32 per person charge at Gray Lodge, and it's wise to bring the exact amount for the Iron Ranger.

Sunday, January 8, 8am Wintering Raptors in the Central Valley Leader: Craig Swolgaard 530-334-3023, cswol@sbcglobal.net

This day will focus on wintering raptors. A published study found that California's Central Valley is one of the richest wintering areas for raptors in the country. The trip will begin at Meiss and Dillard Roads and end at Clay Station and Dillard Roads following a 33 mile loop used as a survey route in a past study. Many species of raptors have been found along this productive drive during the winter months, including Golden Eagle, Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks, White-tailed Kite, Prairie Falcon, Merlin, and Burrowing Owl. This is also a good area to find Mountain Bluebirds in winter and has potential for other vagrants. Meet Craig at the small public parking lot on Highway 16 and Sunrise Blvd at 8am. We will car pool to try and keep the car numbers down, as some of the route uses pullouts on a busy highway. Bring a spotting scope if possible. Trip may go into early afternoon so water and food may be a good idea.

Tuesday, January 10, 9:30am Colusa National Wildlife Refuge Leader: Dan Tankersley, 662-1951 dantank1016@gmail.com

Approximately 1 hour north of Sacramento, the Colusa NWR is a great location to view large waterfowl concentrations. There will be plenty of ducks and geese, as well as other wetland species, passerines and rap-

Field Trips continued on page 4

Field Trips continued from page 3

tors. We will spend a good amount of time on the viewing platform, and then take an easy walk on a level trail through riparian habitat next to the main viewing pond. We will finish our outing to this wonderful NWR by taking the short auto tour. Be prepared for cold and damp weather. Bring scopes and FRS radios if you have them. Meet Dan at the Colusa NWR in the parking area near the restrooms at 9:30. From Sacramento, take I-5 north to Williams; take Exit 578, Hwy 20 east to the refuge entrance, approximately 6 miles. Rain, strong wind, or thick fog cancels. No lunch break, but bring snacks and liquids. The trip will end around 1pm.

Saturday, January 14, 8am
Robinson Road, Road 113
and Bird's Landing
Leader: Bill Bianco, 889-4849
biancowm@yahoo.com

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 Mace Blvd Park and Ride. From Sacramento take I-80 west towards Davis to Mace Blvd (Exit #75); turn right (north) and then right again at the signal light to the Park and Ride exit a short distance beyond Ikeda's Market. We will meet on the south side of the parking lot in the row nearest the big round water tank. Heavy rain or high winds cancel the trip, which will end in the late afternoon.

Saturday, January 14
Beginning Birder Walk
Cosumnes River Preserve

These beginners' field trips are designed to introduce new birders to the fun of birding. On this trip we will focus on waterfowl and easy shorebirds. Limited to 10 adults 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. Further information is on page 6.

Sunday, January 15, 8am
Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge
Leader: John York, 409-9276
Johnyork157@yahoo.com

First stop will be Colusa Wildlife Refuge, checking out the viewing platform, (restrooms available), and then on to SNWR. John will be looking for the great flocks

of ducks and geese that winter in the valley. Peregrine Falcons and Bald Eagles are sometimes seen, as well as herons, egrets and bitterns. 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. Please note there is a fee for each vehicle at the refuge: either \$6 for a day pass or a \$12 Refuge Annual Pass. 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.

Tuesday, January 17, 8am
Sweetwater Creek
Leader: Craig DeMartini, 599-3300
Cloudwalk7@icloud.com

The variety of habitats in this area; lake, riparian forest and chaparral, are good for wintering birds, and those that have moved down-slope. Some possibilities are Steller's Jay, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Pacific (Winter) Wren, Mountain Quail, Golden-crowned Kinglet, California Thrasher, Mountain Bluebird, Band-tailed Pigeon, eagles and Osprey. The wildcard will be the weather. A lot of rain will make the creek a raging torrent, and the walk down to the lake could be muddy, so dress accordingly. Meet Craig at the Bella Bru in the El Dorado Hills shopping center. 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. Rain on the trip day cancels.

Friday, January 20, 7:30am sharp!
Flood and Waverly Roads
Leader: Mark Sawyer, 968-1661
Marksawyer3383@yahoo.com

The Flood/Waverly rolling grasslands in eastern San Joaquin County are excellent for wintering raptors. Mark will be looking for eagles, Ferruginous and Rough-legged hawks, falcons and other open country birds. Meet at the Galt Park and Ride. From Sacramento, take Hwy 99 south to the Twin Cities Rd/Hwy 104 exit (#277); turn left (east) on Twin Cities Rd, cross the freeway and turn right (south) on Stockton Blvd. The Park and Ride is just south of Twin Cities Rd. Bring liquids, lunch, warm clothes, spotting scopes, and FRS radios if possible.

tSaturday, January 21, 10:30am
Effie Yeaw Family Nature Walk

This family friendly nature walk will be at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center in Carmichael. Reservations are not needed, families can simply show up and enjoy a one-hour walk in the lovely Nature Area with naturalists/birders who know the area and enjoy sharing their knowledge. For directions, see sacnaturecenter.net.

Sunday, January 22, 8am
Lincoln Grasslands/West Placer Co
Leader: Scott Hoppe, 835-8471
Shoppe01@surewest.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 Wigeon, Bald Eagle, Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks, and Lewis's Woodpecker are all possible. Join Scott for a full day of exploring this diverse area and bring liquids, lunch and FRS radios if you have them. Meet at the Park and Ride by Brookfield's Restaurant, 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 and park on the right in the Park and Ride.

Sunday, January 22
Beginning Birding Field Trip
William Pond Park

These beginners' field trips are designed to introduce new birders to the fun of birding. Limited to 10 adults 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. Further information is on page 6.

Wednesday, January 25, 8:30am
Lynch Canyon, Solano County
Leader: Ken Poerner, 707-580-6277
kenpoe@sbcglobal.net

This beautiful, 1,039-acre park just off I-80 in Solano County consists of rolling hills with stands of native oak, buckeye and bay trees, small riparian corridors, panoramic vistas and a great pond for wintering ducks, grebes and possible shorebirds. Other wintering and resident birds may include golden eagles plus a variety of harriers, hawks, kites and woodpeckers, Hermit Thrush and quail. This trip involves about a two mile walk on an easy trail and will end mid-day with an optional picnic lunch at tables near the park entrance (weather

permitting). Please note: this area is generally colder, wetter, foggier and windier than Sacramento, so dressing in layers is recommended. To carpool, meet in the Park and Ride in West Sacramento by 7:30am or meet Ken at Lynch Canyon at about 8:30. From Sacramento on I-80 West, after the Fairfield, I-680, Highway 12 exits, take the Red Top Road exit #39A. Go south (left) under the underpass. In less than 0.1 mile, turn right on McGary Road (frontage road that parallels I-80). Follow McGary Road for 1.8 miles. Turn right on Lynch Road, go under the I-80 overpass, and proceed through the gate at the end of the cul-de-sac to the gravel parking lot. Time permitting, Ken will also take folks into the nearby King Ranch.

**Birdwatching for Kids!!!
Saturday, January 28, 9am**

**Humbug Creek, Folsom
Leader: Mara Weston, 208-3222
Mara_weston@yahoo.com**

Bring children and enjoy nature with Mara at the Cummings Family Park in Folsom. You will follow Humbug Creek around an easy 2-3 mile paved loop. This is a great place for a variety of birds including ducks, woodpeckers and sparrows. Sometimes River Otters are seen in the Creek. This is a great morning outing for families. The park is located at the corner of Creekside Drive and Oak Avenue Parkway in Folsom.

**Saturday, January 28, 8am
Bushy Lake**

**Leader: Darrell Mohr, 225-3999
mohrdd@gmail.com**

Meet Darrell in the cul-de-sac at the south end of Ethan Way, just south of where Hurley Way goes into Gate 12 of Cal Expo. Darrell will be looking for a variety of resident and wintering species. With most leaves fallen from the trees, there will be better views of the lake, and Wood Ducks are a good possibility. This will be a 1 to 2 mile hike that will take 2 to 3 hours. You may want to bring water. This is a good trip for beginners and more experienced birders.

**Saturday, January 28, 4pm
Sandhill Cranes and Other Wintering
Birds of the Sacramento Valley
Save Our Sandhill Cranes and
Sacramento Audubon
Coordinator: Mike Savino, 446-1392**

This is the prime time to see our Sandhill Cranes, as well as a variety of ducks, swans, geese, and shorebirds feeding in the flooded fields and marshy areas of the delta, with

hawks patrolling overhead. Meet at the Cosumnes River Preserve Visitor Center deck at 3:30pm to hear a brief talk about Sandhill Crane behavior, biology and status. Then we'll follow the trail at Lost Slough Wetlands, for views of the cranes, 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 and for families

**Sunday, January 29, 7am
Yolo/Solano Big Day
Leader: Scott Hoppe, 835-8471
shoppe01@surewest.net**

Get set for a full day of birding "hot spots" of Yolo and Solano Counties to see how many species we can tally. We have had as many as 121 species on this trip. We will begin at Lake Solano Park and Putah Creek for unique passerines and waterfowl, then head down Highway 113 to the Robinson Road area for raptors and possibly Mountain Plover; then to the Yolo Bypass, the Davis Landfill and WWTP for more waterfowl, shorebirds and gulls. The itinerary can change depending on conditions and reports. For those interested, Scott would like to have a casual dinner nearby to tally up species and talk about what was seen. Scopes and FRS radios are helpful. Bring lunch, snacks, and dress for changeable weather. Meet Scott at the Mace Blvd Park and Ride at 7am. From Sacramento, take I-80 west towards Davis to Mace Blvd (Exit #75); turn right at the light, then right again at the signal light to the Park and Ride entrance, a short distance beyond Ikeda's Market. Rain cancels.

**Sunday, January 29, 4pm
Sandhill Cranes and Other Wintering
Birds of the Sacramento Valley
Save Our Sandhill Cranes and
Sacramento Audubon
Coordinator: Mike Savino, 446-1392**

Check information for same trip on Saturday, January 28.

**Wednesday, February 1, 8am
Glenn Hall Park, Paradise Beach
American River Parkway**

**Leader: Sally Walters Schmoldt,
710-1077, bajaowl@gmail.com**

Join Sally on her monthly walk in this area and see what changes have occurred along the parkway. From Highway 50 take Howe Ave north to Fair Oaks Blvd. Turn left onto Fair Oaks and cross over the American River. Turn right on Carlson Ave, which is the first stop light past the American River bridge. Continue on Carlson Ave to its end, at Glenn Hall Park. Meet on top of the levee. This will be a fairly easy walk, ending about 11am, but expect some uneven terrain, gravel, sand, and rock cobble. This is an excellent trip for beginners.

**Saturday, February 4, 7:30am
Mather Lake**

**Leader: Wayne Blunk, 876-0457
Wayne.Blunk@gmail.com**

Mather Lake is one of Wayne's favorite birding locations, and he usually turns up quite a list of bird species. Join him to look for a nice variety of resident and migrant birds. Possibilities include White-tailed Kites, California Quail, American Bittern, Green Heron and Common Yellowthroat. Meet in the parking lot of Mather Regional Park; from Highway 50, go south on Zinfandel about 2-1/2 miles. After crossing Douglas Blvd, take the first left into the park area. There is a \$5 per car entrance fee; your Sac County Parkway pass is valid here. This is a wonderful trip for beginning birders.

**Sunday, February 5, 7:30am till noon
Michigan Bar and vicinity
Leader: Chris Conard, 203-1610
conardc@gmail.com**

We will focus on Michigan Bar Rd and may visit portions of Latrobe and Meiss Rds, though access will be partially dependent on road conditions and recent weather. Vast areas of open grassland and blue oak woodland interspersed with rocky outcrops and the Cosumnes River provide habitat for winter raptors, resident and winter songbirds, and perhaps a surprise or two. We'll have a mix of car birding (bring FRS radios if you have them) and short to moderate walks. Meet at the Park and Ride on Hwy 16 (Jackson Hwy) just west of Sunrise Blvd and the Folsom South Canal (7 miles east of Watt Ave). Steady rain will cancel the trip.

**Wednesday, February 8, 1:30pm
Colusa National Wildlife Refuge**

Field Trips continued on page 6

Field Trips continued from page 5

Leader: Dan Tankersley, 662-1951
(day of trip only)
dtankers@winfirst.com

Approximately 1 hour north of Sacramento, Colusa NWR is the winter home to large numbers of many waterfowl species. In addition to Snow, Ross's and Greater White-fronted geese, there will be lots of duck species and other wetland birds. Eurasian Wigeon is often seen here and we can expect raptors with the possibility of Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon. Birding will include a good deal of time on the viewing platform, as well as a drive around the tour route. Be prepared for cold and damp weather. Please bring scopes, FRS radios and cameras if you have them. Meet Dan at the Colusa NWR in the parking area near the restrooms. From Sacramento, take I-5 north to Williams; use Exit 578, Hwy 20 east to the refuge entrance, approximately 6 miles. Rain, strong wind, or thick fog may cancel the outing. Call Dan the morning of the trip between 11am and 12:30pm if the weather is questionable. You may want to bring snacks and liquids as the trip will end around 4:30pm.

DUCKS (AND MORE) IN SCOPES

A great trip for families, youth groups and newer birders. This is an opportunity to work on duck identification as well as other wetland birds.

Stop by the Cosumnes River Preserve and check out Ducks In Scopes, where docents have a row of scopes set up, including lower ones for children, giving you good views of the many colorful ducks and other wetland birds. A microscope and hand lens provide close-up looks at 'Duck Soup', dishes of water dipped from the pond full of sand fleas, dragonfly nymphs, and other squiggly things that provide the protein the birds are feeding on. The Preserve is a quick drive from Sacramento—south on I-5 to Twin Cities Road; left (east) on Twin Cities for 1 mile; then right (south) on Franklin Blvd. The viewing area is in the first parking lot on your right as you drive into the preserve. Come any time between 10am and 2pm, on the following dates:

2017

January:

Saturdays, 1/21 and 1/28

Sundays, 1/1, 1/8, and 1/15

February:

Saturdays, 2/4, 2/18 and 2/25

Sunday 2/12

Birding and Nature Events

21ST ANNUAL MORRO BAY WINTER BIRD FESTIVAL

Morro Bay's 21st Annual Winter Bird Festival will be held **January 13–16, 2017**. Located on California's scenic Central Coast, Morro Bay is located halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco on the Pacific Flyway. Registration is open but some events fill up fast so hurry to the Festival site at morrobaybirdfestival.org or call 805-234-1170.

SNOW GOOSE FESTIVAL OF THE PACIFIC FLYWAY

The 18th Annual Snow Goose Festival will be held in **Chico** on **January 25-29, 2017**. Registration will begin in December. Further information can be found at snowgoosefestival.org or by email at info@snowgoosefestival.org and phone 530-345-1865. Since many of the trips fill up fast, it is best to get on their mailing or email list, available on their website, or stay in touch on their facebook page at facebook.com/SnowGooseFestival.

FIELD TRIPS FOR BEGINNING BIRDERS

Location: William Pond Park, American River Parkway

Dates: Sunday, January 22 and Sunday, February 19

Location: Cosumnes River Preserve, focusing on wintering waterfowl and some common shorebirds.

Date: Saturday, January 14

These beginner field trips will focus on finding and identifying common birds in a variety of habitats, with an emphasis on where to look and what important field marks to look for. This walk will last about 3 hours and will be led by two or more friendly and experienced Sacramento Audubon trip leaders. Trips are limited to 10 adult participants and registration is required. Register via email to Cathie at empid@earthlink.net, (put "Beginning Birder" in the subject line), and give your name, phone number and email address, or phone Cathie at 457-6882, and leave your name and phone number. Following registration you will receive additional information regarding the field trip.

Join Us For Family Field Trips!

Humbug Creek. On Saturday, January 28, at 9am Mara Weston will lead a trip for kids. Complete trip and contact information can be found on page 5.

Cosumnes River Preserve. On New Year's Day at 9am Tim Fitzer will lead a family-friendly walk. Complete trip information can be found on page 3.

Sacramento Bar. On Sunday, February 19, at 9am, Paul Cordero will lead a family-friendly trip to Sacramento Bar. This morning walk along the American River will be geared to children and their families. With Paul's skill, you will see and hear a nice variety of resident and wintering birds. This is a great area for children and families to be reminded how nice a walk along the River can be! This trip will last about 2 hours, and loaner binoculars are available. From Highway 50, drive north on Sunrise Blvd; turn left on Fair Oaks Blvd. and take the first left on Pennsylvania. A Sac County Park Pass or \$5 entry fee is required for all vehicles. Paul's contact information is: pkcordero@gmail.com, 454-4061. Paul prefers email contact.

There is so much interest in these events that family-friendly trips are being planned for most months. The next great family and kids birding trip will be in March. Information, including location, date and time will be in next month's Observer. Check Facebook.com/SacramentoAudubon or the SAS website at SacramentoAudubon.org for more details.

THE CENTRAL VALLEY BIRD CLUB'S YOUTH BIRDING CAMP AND SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM.

The David Yee Scholarship Fund will provide annual scholarships to birding camps for young birders. Camps include camps close to home in the Sierras, Seattle and Arizona. Both the selection criteria and award process will include elements directly related to birding. For all camps, the scholarship will pay for the cost of the registration for the youth participant while transportation will be the responsibility of the participant. Application deadline is February 15, 2017 but remember camp registration may be much sooner. Information can be found at cvbirds.org/youth-scholarship-fund/. You can also contact CVBC Vice President John Sterling at his email, jsterling@wavecable.com, if you have further questions.

Findings continued from page 2

passerines. We totaled 41 species for the morning."

Lincoln Grasslands #2 (11/27) — Scott Hoppe, co-leader with Mark Martucci, reported: "We started out with nearly cloudless skies and 14 participants (one party of 3 dropped out after lunch). To be fair to the Saturday trip, I think many opted for Sunday because of the weather. The first excitement of the day was a mature Bald Eagle perched on a snag south of Chamberlain Rd. It later flew north and was joined by a juvenile Bald Eagle. We later found a Prairie Falcon flying distantly near the Manzanita Cemetery. Lewis's Woodpeckers put on a good show on Gladding Rd. As the day wore on, we began to worry if we would find Ferruginous Hawk, which is normally found in the area in winter. But we were rewarded on Nader Rd with an adult perched on a fence post. One of the greatest spectacles of the day was a conservatively estimated 1500 White-faced Ibis on North Brewer Rd. We tallied 99 species of birds for the day, including 13 raptor species."

Lincoln Grasslands #1 (11/26) — Richard Barbieri, co-leader with Tim Fitzer, reported: "Tim and I were joined by 3 other people on a rainy day forecast that under normal circumstances would have cancelled the trip, but we had a bet to keep and we needed to get as many bird species as possible no matter what! As it turned out we did pretty well with highlights like 1 Peregrine with a Meadowlark kill, 3 Prairie Falcons, 1 Merlin, and a lots of Kestrels. We also had 3 Ferruginous Hawks, Rock Wrens, Rufous-crowned Sparrows, Great-horned and Barn Owls, Spotted Sandpiper, Long-billed Curlew, and Cattle Egret. Total for the day was 96 species."

River Bend Park (11/22) — Leader Cathie LaZier reported: "Five people

joined me for this morning walk. We missed several common species, but totaled 33 for the morning. A cooperative immature accipiter posed in scope view, allowing us time to consider all the field marks, assisted by Sue Darst's Sibley app. Amy (sorry, forgot last name), was a super spotter — if I said Great Horned Owls, or Green Heron, or such are in this area, she immediately spotted one. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet, flashing his red crown feathers, was a treat for several birders."

Sailor Bar (11/20) — Leader Mark Martucci reported: "Seven birders saw 54 species of birds on a very overcast day along the American River Parkway. Highlights included Common and Barrow's Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Green Heron, Spotted Sandpiper, Bufflehead and Peregrine Falcon, which was a life bird for some participants."

Sutter's Landing Regional Park (11/19) — Leader Ben Graber reported: "I didn't have to cancel (because of the rain) though it did end a bit sooner than I planned. The rain was light and intermittent at first, and we saw a surprising variety of birds. The highlights were Red-shouldered Hawk, Snowy Egret, Wood Duck, Bufflehead, White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Killdeer. We had about 6 participants, and it was a good trip while the weather held out!"

Putah Creek (11/16) — Leader Bill Bianco reported: "Six of us had a cool sunny morning on our walk along Putah Creek. We observed 26 species, with sightings of Red-breasted Sapsucker, Cooper's Hawk, Western Bluebirds, White-breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Nuttall's and Acorn Woodpeckers to name a few. We heard but did not see a Belted Kingfisher."

Cathie LaZier

RESULTS OF THE 32ND ANNUAL ARNHA COUNT

The 32nd Annual American River Natural History Association (ARNHA) Wildlife Count was held on Saturday, December 3, 2016 and joined by 67 participants. Eleven teams, including 1 team in a canoe, counted along the Lower American River from Hazel Avenue to Sutter's Landing. Count results show a total of 13,595 birds in 109 species (127 taxa including subspecies and other taxa), compared with 19,738 birds in 114 species in 2015 (and 132 species in 2014).

This year we did not see any Canvasbacks, Northern Harriers, Common Gallinule (often found in Discovery Park, which was not included this year), Mew Gulls, Varied Thrush, or Savannah Sparrows, but we did see one Mute Swan between Watt and Arden and one Common Raven in the Sailor Bar area. We did not have a team covering Discovery Park this year, which may explain why some species were missed. Next year we hope to form a team who knows the Discovery Park area well and feel comfortable navigating terrain shared by homeless and loose dogs.

Rachael Cowan

NEW MERLIN PHOTO ID APP

The Merlin Bird Photo ID mobile app has been launched and, thanks to machine-learning technology, can identify hundreds of North American species it "sees" in photos. Because Merlin Bird Photo ID can be used on mobile devices, it can go anywhere bird watchers go.

"When you open the Merlin Bird Photo ID app, you're asked if you want to take a picture with your smartphone or pull in an image from your digital camera," explains Merlin project leader Jessie Barry at the Cornell Lab. "You zoom in on the bird, confirm the date and location, and Merlin will show you the top choices for a match from among the 650 North American species it knows."

"Accuracy is around 90 percent if the user's photo is of good quality. Submit a fuzzy image or one in which the bird is small or partially covered by leaves and the odds go down," says Caltech postdoctoral researcher Steve Branson.

Photo ID may be downloaded free for iOS or Android systems from the Apple and Google Play app stores. It is included in the Merlin Bird ID app, which was originally released in 2014 and asked users five questions to help them identify a bird they saw.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!

Debara Johnson, Phil and Mary Laing, Marya Liberty, Louis Regenmorter and Judith G Tracy made donations to the **General Fund**.

Martin D Bailey, Melissa Gates, Debara Johnson, K Globus and B Klass, Phil and Mary Laing, Mary P Morris, D Brown and W Patterson, Carol Sughrue, Jane G Taylor and Judith G Tracy made donations to the **Conservation and Education Fund**.

Thank you for your continued support of Sacramento Audubon and its work in the community.

FUTURE SAS PROGRAMS

2017

- February 16** Steph Clymer, *Historical Records into e-Birdg*
- March 16** Paul Bannick, *A Year in the life of North American Owls*
- April 20** Steven T Callan, *The Game Warden's Son*
- May 18** Joe Ferreira, *Asian Nature Transect: Enjoying the Wildlife of India, Bhutan and Thailand*

BINOCULARS RATED AT AUDUBON.ORG

Just go to audubon.org/section/gear-advice and you'll find binoculars ranked for three categories of good value, midrange and high-end.

SAS OUTREACH

YOUR CHANCE TO HELP AND HAVE FUN TOO

Spring events are on the calendar and we need volunteers to work at our table. You do not need to be an accomplished birder, just someone who enjoys birding, and talking to people about our field trips and SAS and you would work with an experienced volunteer.

Your help would be appreciated at one of the following events.

- Wildflower Wonders, CNPS: Saturday, March 25
- Return of Swainson's Hawk: Sunday, April 2
- Creek Week, Carmichael Park: Saturday, April 29
- Walk on the Wild Side, south of Freeport: Saturday, May 20
- Wildlife Art Festival: Saturday and Sunday, July 22 and 23

If you can work a 3 or 4 hour shift at one of these events, please contact Bill Bianco at biancowm@yahoo.com, or 372-3318. Thanks to all volunteers present and future!

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.

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S FIELD TRIPS

SPONSORED BY:

SACRAMENTO AUDUBON SOCIETY AND EFFIE YEAW NATURE CENTER

Cosumnes River Preserve Sunday, January 1, 2017
Leader: Tim Fitzer

Kids' Christmas Bird Counts—1 date remaining for registration:
Ages 6 to 10 Saturday, January 7 (FULL)
Ages 10 and Up Sunday, January 8

The Kids' CBCs require pre-registration. For both dates, visit sacnaturecenter.org

Family Nature Walk Saturday, January 21
Location: Effie Yeaw Nature Center in Carmichael

Humbug Creek Saturday, January 28
Leader: Mara Weston

Family Nature Walk Saturday, February 18
Location: Effie Yeaw Nature Center in Carmichael

Sacramento Bar Sunday, February 19
Leader: Paul Cordero

For more information and directions to events at Effie Yeaw Nature Center in Carmichael, visit sacnaturecenter.org.

Other events are sponsored by Sacramento Audubon. For more information, visit sacramentoaudubon.org or facebook.com/SacramentoAudubon.

Seasonal Observations

November 1 to November 30

Rare and Unusual Bird Reports

www.cvbirds.org/ListServ.htm

After a very busy September, reports in strictly avian terms, the biggest regional news was of typically pelagic **Red Phalaropes** turning up in many inland locations, including the Central Valley. The other notable theme was the lack of montane and northern irruptives that characterized the past two winters. So far this season, there have been very few reports of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** and **Pine Siskins**, relatively few **Lewis's Woodpeckers** and **Golden-crowned Kinglets**, and very few **Varied Thrushes**. Among waterfowl reports, **Blue-winged Teal** numbers continue a steady climb, most impressively with 177 at Bridgeway Island Pond on 11/6. Inland **Surf Scoter** reports included one at the Marysville Sewage Ponds from 11/6-21 and one at the out-of-the-way Frog Pond off of Rayhouse Rd in Cache Creek Canyon on 11/13-14.

SAS NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to this
new member:

Jane Adams

Robert Gorham

John Hess

Mr and Mrs Michael W Laing

Jan Roberson

Jeffrey Shelton

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, 2017 at 7pm. Board meetings are held at the Lemon Grass Cafe Meeting Room, 601 Munroe St, Sacramento, 95825.

Minutes of Board Meetings can be found online at sacramentoaudubon.org/societyinfo/archives.html. Scroll down to Board Minutes.

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

Mara Weston, Membership Chair, mara_weston@yahoo.com
7708 McClintock Way, Sacramento, CA 95828-4321

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.

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SAS ACTION ON FACEBOOK

facebook.com/SacramentoAudubon



Observations continued

The fields near Plainfield School at Yolo County Rds 25 and 96 have hosted good numbers of **Ferruginous Hawks** in recent fall and winter seasons. On 11/6, three were reported, including one dark morph. **Rough-legged Hawk** reports included singles at Yolo County Rd 28H between Rds 103 and 104 on 11/5, the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area (YBWA) on 11/15, Scott Rd on 11/22, and Meiss Rd on 11/27. The inland invasion of **Red Phalaropes** in our region was represented by up to four at Colusa NWR seen from Able Rd on 11/18-23 and one at the YBWA on 11/27. Two **Marbled Godwits** were reported from Colusa NWR on 11/25.

The only reports of **Short-eared Owls** came from Yolo County Rd 30, with one on 11/15 and two on 11/29, and a **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was a nice surprise in a Roseville yard on 11/16. A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was photographed along Rd 78A in the Capay Valley on 11/5. The male **Costa's Hummingbird** that was

banded as a hatch-year in September 2013 and has spent much of its life on private property along Putah Creek between Winters and Davis was seen on 11/16 after an absence of months. A late **Hammond's Flycatcher** was found at Cosumnes River Preserve's Tall Forest on 11/12 and a **Cassin's Vireo** was photographed at Bobelaine Sanctuary on 11/27. A **Plumbeous Vireo** in the Covell Park area of North Davis from 11/5 through most of the month was a nice find for the region. An **American Dipper** was found at the traditional location downstream from the Hwy 128 Bridge in the Putah Creek Canyon from 11/14-25 and a **Sage Thrasher** was an excellent find near the Michigan Bar Bridge, south of the Cosumnes River, on 11/20-21.

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

The Sacramento Area is roughly defined as lying between Hwy 20 to the north, Hwy 12 to the south, and the 1000' contour to the east and west, plus all of Sacramento and Yolo Counties. Many reports first appeared on the Central Valley Bird Club Listserve (cvbirds.org) and in eBird. It is impossible to list everyone, but I want to thank the following for their reports:

Roger Adamson, Stuart Angerer, Keith Bailey, Ted Beedy, Ken Britten, Elliot Chasin, Dan Cook, Kathy DeFay, Chris Dunford, Gil Ewing, Ian Gledhill, Steve Hampton, Darlene Hecomovich, Dan Kopp, Manfred Kusch, Jeri Langham, Sami LaRocca, Eric LoPresti, Calvin Lou, David Nickerson, Frances Oliver, Muriel Parker, Linda Pittman, Jim Rowoth, Shannon Skalos, Kirk Swenson, Linda and Scott Terrill, Charley Walker, and Rick Williams.

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

Chris Conard

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White-tailed Kite Dan Brown

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

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

ATTEND THE NEXT SACRAMENTO AUDUBON PROGRAM

January 19, 2017

Mike Caldwell:

Things That Sting and Bite

At the Effie Yeaw Nature Center, 7pm



Mike Caldwell,
releasing a
rattlesnake in
Shingle Springs