



The OBSERVER

Sacramento Audubon Society

General Meeting

Thursday, January 21, 2010
Shepard Garden and Art Center
7pm General Meeting

Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area A Delta Success Story

Most people who live in the Sacramento area have crossed the Yolo Bypass when it was a wide, brown, fast moving river of water. It's an attention-getter when in the flooded state. How many people cross it when it's not diverting floodwater, having no idea that it is a State Wildlife Area, open to the public—for free?

The Delta is one of the most important regions in California and now sits in the center of controversy. Dave Feliz will present the success story of the Yolo Wildlife Area, a facility whose origins lay in the grass-roots efforts of local people. This facility is providing multiple public benefits and has become a tremendous outdoor asset for local communities. It is a model for what should be happening throughout the Central Valley.

A key piece of the Pacific Flyway, next door to the Capital of California, has been restored and is being managed for many uses, providing a wide variety of benefits.

The functions and their order of priority are:

1. Flood Control
2. Wildlife and habitat management
3. Recreation and educational uses

The Yolo Wildlife Area is located within the Yolo Bypass, a flood control structure within the historic Yolo Basin floodplain, whose boundaries are defined by constructed levees. The Bypass carries Sacramento River water at overflow to the Delta and is operated as part of the Sacramento River Flood Control System. The Wildlife Area has been carefully designed and constructed to avoid impacts on the flood carrying capacity of the Yolo Bypass, and hazardous levels of mosquitos without

HERE IT COMES

THE 13TH ANNUAL GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT! FEBRUARY 12-15 2010!

The Great Backyard Bird Count is coming up soon and the SAS Education Committee has many events planned to get our Sacramento area checklist numbers up. For Sacramento alone, 112 species and 216 checklists were reported making it the number one city in California for checklists! This year's goal is to get to the top ten cities in the USA! Not so far away—number ten was Wilmington, North Carolina with 250 checklists, so let's get everyone out counting this year!

To start with, we have a series of Backyard Birds Workshops planned around the Sacramento area. These workshops include a 15 minute PowerPoint presentation about the GBBC followed by a 30 minute introduction to the birds of our Sacramento area backyards. Appropriate for ages 8 and up. Note the two special children's events at Fair Oaks Library and in Old Town Sacramento.

Workshops for this Year:

- Saturday, January 16, 12 noon, Carmichael Library
- Thursday, January 21, 3:30-4:30pm, Fair Oaks Library
Special Children's Puppet Show Presentation with the Fenner Family
- Saturday, January 23, 2pm, Franklin Library (in Elk Grove)
- Tuesday, January 26, 6:30pm, North Natomas Library
- Saturday, January 30, 2pm, Arden-Dimick Library
- January 30, 4pm, Sylvan Oaks Library
- Saturday, February 6, 2pm, South Natomas Library

Other Public Events:

- Sunday, February 7, 1pm, Kid GBBC Workshop Trailmix in Old Town Sacramento, 116B I Street, right across from the California Train Museum.

Julie Serences, Education Chair
education@sacramentoaudubon.org

GBBC Field Trips continued on page 6

impacting surrounding farming operations. Intensive management is necessary to accommodate the constraints imposed by these conditions and still provide suitable habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife species.

The major change resulting from the creation of the Wildlife Area concerns water control and wildlife management during non-flood periods.

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

Lea Landry, Program Chair

Field Trip Findings

Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge (12/13) — Leader Andi Salmi reported: “Our small group of 5 enjoyed a beautiful day at the refuge. Hundreds of thousands of Snow Geese took flight as the sun broke through the clouds. Five Bald Eagles (one eating a fish), several Peregrine Falcons and a Prairie Falcon feeding on a duck were our highlights. The duck species viewed included Ring-necked Duck, Mallard, Shoveler, Pintail, Cinnamon and Green-winged Teal, and Gadwall among others.

Wetlands and Waterfowl Tour II (12/12) — Leader Roger Jones reported the trip was rained out and rescheduled to December 10.

Nimbus Fish Hatchery/American River (12/6) — Leader Ed Harper reported: “Some 15 birders—two from as far away as Colorado—showed up to enjoy the birds of the Upper Sunrise area of the American River Parkway. Undeterred by the cold weather in the low 40s with a brisk wind adding to the chill, the group enjoyed a nice mix of birds. Two Ospreys soaring overhead provided a nice start that was followed by some 50 White-throated Swifts racing through the gray skies. We watched their twinkling flight and wondered aloud what mysterious prey they might be feeding upon in the frigid weather. Gull numbers were down, commensurate with the low salmon run this fall, but five species of gulls still afforded an interesting study. A nearby first-cycle Thayer’s Gull provided good looks and a chance to discuss its distinctive field marks. The river was alive with ducks. Numbers of both male and female Barrow’s Goldeneyes were studied at length amid the flocks of some 250 Common Goldeneyes, 55 Common Mergansers, and a couple of Buffleheads. But the prize of the day was a perched Merlin that posed for lingering scope views along with many photos by avid photographers. It was a female of the race columbarius that had just feasted on some luckless bird as was evident from the distended crop and

bloody residue on the bill. Cold or not, the field trip was a great way to savor the priceless asset we have in the American River Parkway.”

Great American River Wildlife Count (12/5) — For the first time in the 25-year history of the Count, a sea lion and a Clark’s Grebe were spotted in the river on a cold Saturday, Jack Hiehle, coordinator with Lea Landry, reported. Also listed were Virginia Rail and Sora at Sailor Bar, and a Long-eared Owl. A record 115 bird species were spotted by the mostly Sacramento Audubon observers, some in canoes. They also counted 13 mammal species, including 114 deer, mostly in Ancil Hoffman County Park; 10 coyotes, 1 river otter, 16 black-tailed hares, 28 ground squirrels, 74 gray squirrels and 205 fox squirrels. The event is sponsored by the American River Natural History Association. Jack and Lea were co-coordinators for this year’s ARNHA Wildlife Count. After 25 years, Jack is relinquishing the duties of the coordinator, which will be assumed by Lea, starting with the 2010 Wildlife Count.

Nimbus Fish Hatchery (12/1) — Leader Jack Hiehle reported that his group saw a Green Heron, Pied-billed Grebe, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Barrow’s Goldeneye, Bufflehead, a pair of Ospreys, California Quail, Greater Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper, Downy Woodpecker, Oak Titmouse, Bushtit, Phainopepla, and junco.

Road 113, Robinson Road and Birds Landing area (11/29) — Leader Tim Fitzer reported: “We observed, 2 Ferruginous Hawks, 1 Rough-legged Hawk, 12 Loggerhead Shrikes, 9 Say’s Phoebes, 200+ Long-billed Curlews, 1 Mountain Blue Bird, 4 Burrowing Owls, many Tricolored Blackbirds, and 25 Mountain Plovers in a plowed field on Flannery Rd, and a flyover of about 25 more. It was the first time I have ever seen them in a flock in flight. Total about 50+ birds. It was a great day birding, but then again they are all great. We had a fun time.”

American River between Howe and Watt (11/29) — Leader Dan Kopp reported: “The day was almost a complete bust due to severe wind, but six hearty birders showed up to endure the elements. The best bird was a Parkway first for me, a Varied Thrush; seen briefly by a few of us near the top of a tree before it flew to the ground and out of sight. A Merlin was a nice treat as well but was more expected. A few swifts were a surprise in the high wind. I couldn’t refind a White-throated Sparrow I found on 11/24, due to the poor conditions; I have found it at least three times in the past week though. We all enjoyed great views of three river otters fully out of the water near the start and two otters near the end; it was in the same general area so it was likely they were the same individuals.”

Solano Lake/Monticello Dam (11/22) — Leader Maureen Geiger reported: “It was a cool, foggy morning, but Lake Solano really came through. About 14 of us watched a Pileated Woodpecker shred part of a tree. This gorgeous bird remained so long we finally moved on. In addition we saw many Hermit Thrushes, Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets and the usual winter species. A very nice trip.”

Colusa National Wildlife Refuge (11/17) — Leader Dan Tankersley reported: “Today’s group saw 60 species including a great study of three Eurasian Wigeons from the viewing platform. Two other Eurasian Wigeons were found as well. The auto tour loop provided close views of several river otters and the group watched a Great Blue Heron take a three-foot-long snake as a prey item. Several of the many Greater White-fronted, Snow and Ross’s geese provided exceptional looks, as did most of the duck species found. A great day in the field encouraged all of us in attendance to plan to go back to Colusa NWR in the near future.”

Pete Hayes

AUDUBON OUTREACH

November’s Central Valley Birding Symposium was a success for the Sacramento Audubon Outreach table. We had one of the best looking exhibits there, and sold 16 of our *Birding the Greater Sacramento Area* books. Lea Landry did most of the tabling, helped by Cathie LaZier and Louise McCullough. Tim

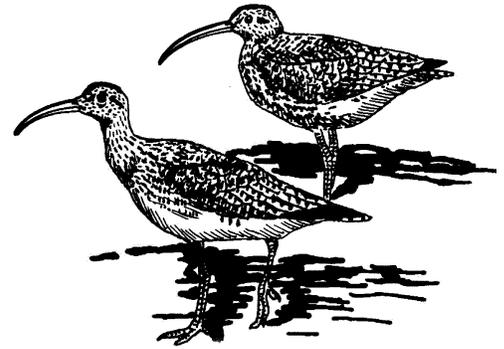
Fitzer and Joe Ceriani helped with the set up and take down. Our next appearance will be at the Galt Winter Bird Festival, Saturday, January 30th, 2010. Contact Cathie LaZier at 457-6882 or empid@earthlink.net if you can help on that day.

Field Trips

Field Trip Information

For questions regarding the trip or checking the status of the trip in case of unfavorable weather conditions, please call the trip leader first. If he or she cannot be reached, call the scheduler Tim Fitzer, 870-5207, spskua2@comcast.net. For trips through January 31st. From February 6th on, call the scheduler Richard Barbieri, 966-4603, 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.



Stephen D'Amato

Friday, January 1 Sonoma Valley Christmas Count

Compilers: Tom Rusert and Derren Peteric
(707) 939-8007, www.SonomaBirding.org

Saturday, January 2, 8:30am Bobelaine Audubon Sanctuary Leader: Brian Gilmore, 451-9146

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

Sunday, January 3 Folsom Christmas Count

Compiler: Chris Conard, 203-1610
e-mail: conardc@gmail.com

Tuesday, January 5, 8:30am Yolo Wildlife Area Leader: Marlene Ishihara, 635-9758 IshiM2000@comcast.net

Join Marlene for a preview of this great area, just minutes from downtown Sacramento, which will be the topic of our January 21st general meeting. On the auto tour route, there may be good numbers of shorebirds and waterfowl and possible raptors such as Peregrine Falcon. White-faced Ibis and Northern Harriers may be seen overhead, and Savannah Sparrows and Horned Larks are visible on the road. 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. Scopes are helpful on this trip which is good for both beginners and more experienced birders.

Saturday, January 9, 8am SHARP Hot Birding Spots in the North Bay Leader: Ron Storey, (707) 762-5276 ronstorey@ronstorey.com Coordinator: Tim Fitzer, 870-5207 spskua2@comcast.net

Meet Tim at the West Sacramento Park and Ride to start the trip. We'll meet Ron at Shollenberger Park in Petaluma at 9:30, and spend a little time there looking for Blue-winged Teal, Sora and Virginia Rail, and any other odd birds that may be around. We'll then drive to Las Gallinas and do a little bird watching there, looking for Eurasian and Common Teal, Hooded Merganser, and any other odd birds (i.e. Peregrine Falcon). From Las Gallinas we will drive south to Corte Madera Marsh in search of Clapper Rail. Dress appropriately for the weather; bring lunch and water. (Option: Ron plans to make a lunch stop for pizza!). Bring FRS radios and scopes if you have them. To meet at the Park and Ride off I-80 in West Sacramento, take the West Capitol Ave Exit #81; turn left at the light and then left again into the Park and Ride lot, on the north side of the freeway.

Saturday, January 9 2pm till dark Sandhill Cranes and Other Wintering Birds of the Sacramento Valley

A Save Our Sandhill Cranes-sponsored trip

Coordinator: Mike Savino, 446-1392

Sandhill Cranes are the focus of this trip but ducks, swans and geese, as well as shorebirds, feed in the flooded fields and marshy areas of the delta, and hawks patrol overhead. Meet at the Cosumnes River Preserve Visitor Center parking lot at 2pm for a short introduction to crane behavior and biology by Paul Tebbel, then 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 Staten Island, to see flocks of cranes fly in to roost for the night. Dress for changeable weather; bring binoculars, scopes and FRS radios if you have them. From Sacramento, take I-5 south to Twin Cities Road; go left (east) to the stop sign at Franklin Blvd; turn right (south) on Franklin and, driving through the Preserve, watch for the Visitor Center parking lot on your left. Further directions and maps are available at www.cosumnes.org. This is a great trip for beginners.

Sunday, January 10, 8am Salt Springs Valley Leaders: Tim Fitzer, 870-5207 Spskua2@comcast.net Mark Martucci, 833-6722 matuchbirdman@yahoo.com

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

Field Trips continued on page 4

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miss. Meet in the parking lot in front of the Wal-Mart located on the west side of Hwy 99 at the Elk Grove Boulevard exit. The trip will last into the late afternoon so bring lunch, liquids, warm clothing and FRS radios.

**Wednesday, January 13, 8am
River Bend Park**

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

Meet Cathie at the 1st parking lot on your right, just past the entrance kiosk. We'll walk through the oak woodland, looking for small woodland birds and woodpeckers. We sometimes have good looks at Red-shouldered Hawks or Great Horned Owls. At the river we should see mergansers, goldeneye, herons, yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpipers and possibly a kingfisher. Walk will end by noon, and it's a great walk for beginners. River Bend (formerly Goethe) Park is at the end of Rod Beaudry Drive, off Folsom Blvd between Bradshaw and Mather Field Roads in Rancho Cordova. There is a \$5 per car entrance fee.

**Saturday, January 16, 8am
Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge**

**Leader: John York, 409-9276
sonofyork@att.net**

John 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. We'll return through the Dunnigan Hills, a good area for raptors, Burrowing Owls and wintering sparrows. This is a good trip for newer birders and experienced birders alike. FRS radios are helpful on this trip. Meet John at the Woodland Jack-in-the-Box. Take I-5 north toward Woodland; exit at County Road 102 (#536); turn right (north) on 102 and turn right into the Jack-in-the-Box parking lot. 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.

**Sunday, January 17, 8am
Gray Lodge Wildlife Area**

**Leaders: Ken Hashagen, 316-8596
khashagen@mindspring.com
Cathie LaZier, 457-6882
empid@earthlink.net**

Join Ken and Cathie 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, warm clothing and FRS radios. 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 \$2.50 per person charge at the Wildlife Area.

**Tuesday, January 19, 8:30am
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, 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. Scopes are helpful on this trip which is good for both beginners and more experienced birders. After touring the area, plan to join us at our general meeting on Thursday evening to hear Dave Feliz talk about this special area.

**Saturday, January 23, 8am
Pleasants Valley Rd./Putah
Creek (Solano Co.)**

**Leader: Gary Fregien
708-0636
calaveri@sbcglobal.net**

This outing entails driving to the Vacaville area to pick up Pleasants Valley Road, and birding our way up to Hwy 128, then Putah Creek, Solano Lake and the Monticello Dam Overlook. Gary will make several stops along Pleasants Valley Rd, looking for winter passerines, including Phainopepla, Western Bluebird and Say's Phoebe. Along Putah Creek and Solano Lake, we should see Barrow's Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, American Dipper, and Osprey. At the Monticello Dam Overlook, we'll be watching for Canyon and Rock

Wrens, and possibly Peregrine Falcon. Plan to spend 3-4 hours birding, plus driving time there and back. There will be minimal hiking, but dress for winter conditions. Bring along FRS radios, food and water. Our lunch spot will be at Solano Lake County Park, where there is a day-use fee. We'll also look for Pileated Woodpecker and owls there. Meet Gary 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. Car pooling is strongly advised, due to limited access at stops and the distance traveled.

**Saturday, January 23, 2pm - dark
Sandhill Cranes and Other Wintering
Birds of the Sacramento Valley
A Save Our Sandhill Cranes-sponsored
trip**

Coordinator: Mike Savino, 446-1392

Sandhill Cranes are the focus of this trip but ducks, swans and geese, as well as shorebirds, feed in the flooded fields and marshy areas of the delta, and hawks patrol overhead. Meet at the Cosumnes River Preserve Visitor Center parking lot at 2pm for a short introduction to crane behavior and biology by Paul Tebbel, then 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 Staten



Kirsten Munson

Island, to see flocks of cranes fly in to roost for the night. Dress for changeable weather; bring binoculars, scopes and FRS radios if you have them. From Sacramento, take I-5 south to Twin Cities Road; go left (east) to the stop sign at Franklin Blvd; turn right (south) on Franklin and, driving through the Preserve, watch for the Visitor Center parking lot on your left. Further directions and maps are available at www.cosumnes.org. This is a great trip for beginners.

**Sunday, January 24, 8am
Road 113, Robinson Road and
Birds Landing Area**

Leader: Tim Fitzer, 870-5207
spskua2@comcast.net
Mark Martucci, 833-6722
matuchbirdman@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 Park and Ride off I-80 in West Sacramento. From Sacramento, take the West Capitol Ave Exit #81; turn left at the light and then left again into the Park and Ride lot, on the north side of the freeway. This trip will last into the afternoon.

Monday, January 25, 7:45am
Colusa National Wildlife Refuge
Leader: Dan Tankersley, 606-6518
dtankers@winfirst.com

The Colusa NWR is another of the great Central Valley locations to view large waterfowl concentrations. There will be many duck species and plenty of Snow, Ross's and Greater White-fronted Geese. 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 and finish our outing with a return visit to the platform. Be prepared for cold and damp weather. Weather permitting, there should be ample photo ops. If you have these items, bring your scope and FRS radio. Meet Dan 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. Bring snacks and liquids as the trip will end in the late morning to early afternoon. We will leave the meeting area at 8am SHARP. Rain and/or high wind cancels.

Saturday, January 30, 8:30am
Nimbus Fish Hatchery
Leader: Dan Kopp, 213-2791
rey-ality@hotmail.com

Sharpen your 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.

Sunday, January 31, 9am
Hansen Ranch Park Preserve
Leader: Jonilynn Okano, 397-1295
jonilynn@rcip.com

If you have never been to Hansen Ranch, you are in for a treat! We will take a nice leisurely walk on the gravel embankment above the pond that overlooks the preserve's many unique qualities. The habitat is mainly marsh but also has open fields and a tree line in the distance. These trees host a heron and egret rookery in the spring. Turkey and coyote might be present strolling across the grasslands. In January, various species of waterfowl, along with hawks and falcons should also be there. The pond has an active beaver colony and other surprises hidden in the reeds; come join us and let us find them together! Wear warm clothing; bring liquids and snacks. This trip is good for beginners and will end before noon. Please bring scopes if you have one. Meet at the Starbucks at 4110 Norwood Avenue and I-80 (North Side) at 8am.

February 6, 7:30am
Lincoln Grasslands
Leader: Scott Hoppe
835-8471
shoppe01@earthlink.net

We will search the back roads of western Placer County for raptors, waterfowl, Tri-colored Blackbirds and Lewis' Woodpeckers. This area is known for high concentrations of wintering raptors (up to 12 species can be seen in a day), and is also a magnet for wintering ducks and geese. Meet Scott at the 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. Bring lunch, scopes and FRS radios if you have them.

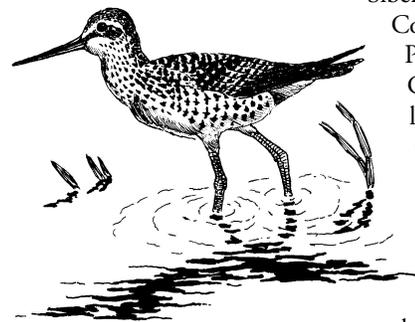
Sunday, February 7, 7:30am
Yuba County Wetlands

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.

Sunday, February 7, 2pm - dark
Sandhill Cranes and Other Wintering Birds of the Sacramento Valley
This Year's Last Save Our Sandhill Cranes-sponsored trip
Coordinator: Mike Savino, 446-1392

If you haven't been on one of these crane trips, make sure to join Mike for this one. The cranes will be leaving us soon for their nesting areas, which range from relatively close, like Sierra Valley, to as far away as



Stephen D'Amato

Siberia. Meet at the Cosumnes River Preserve Visitor Center parking lot at 2pm for a short introduction to crane behavior and biology by Paul Tebbel, then 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 Staten Island, to see flocks of cranes fly in to roost for the night. Dress for changeable weather; bring binoculars, scopes and FRS radios if you have them. From Sacramento, take I-5 south to Twin Cities Road; go left (east) to the stop sign at Franklin Blvd; turn right (south) on Franklin and, driving through the Preserve, watch for the Visitor Center parking lot on your left. Further directions and maps are available at www.cosumnes.org. This is a great trip for beginners.

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Field Trips continued from page 5

**Wednesday, February 10, 9am – noon
Jacob Lane area, American River
Parkway**

Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777

Join Jack on a 3 hour walk looking at native and non-native plant species, mammals and birds. This walk is great for beginning and more experienced nature lovers. Meet Jack at the end of Jacob Lane, which runs south off Fair Oaks Blvd, between Arden and Eastern.

**Thursday, February 11, 8:30am
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 are helpful on this trip which is good for both beginners and more experienced birders.

**Sunday, February 14, 7:30am
Rush Ranch and Grizzly Island,
Solano County**

**Leaders: Maureen Geiger, 444-0804
Email: mkgeiger@sbcglobal.net
Ken Poerner, 707-580-6277
Email: kenpoe@sbcglobal.net**

This trip to Solano County will begin with a brief tour of Rush Ranch, an operating cattle ranch on the beautiful Suisun Marsh owned by the Solano Land Trust. We will then explore Grizzly Island Wildlife Area looking for shorebirds, ducks, raptors, shrikes, and other wintering birds which

may be found in the wetlands and grassland habitats, particularly in the winter. There is a \$2.50 fee to enter the Wildlife Area. Bring lunch and liquids as the trip will last into mid-afternoon. Meet at the Park and Ride in West Sacramento. From I-80, take the West Sacramento Exit; turn left at the light; then left again into the lot. To meet at Rush Ranch, contact Maureen or Ken.

**February, 13, 14 and 15
President's Day Weekend
Eureka/Arcata area
Leaders, Dan Brown 362-2458
naturestoc@aol.com
Joe Ceriani, Email -
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.

GBBC Field Trips continued from page 1

GBBC FIELD TRIPS

Thanks to Marlene, Cathie, Wayne, Robert and Julie, we also have beginning birders Field Trips planned for the GBBC weekend. Come out and sharpen your bird watching skills. All are welcome!

Join Sacramento Audubon members for Beginner Bird Counts on GBBC Weekend February 12-15. Bring binoculars and pencils/pens for recording our species count. Contact Julie Serences at 548-0618 education@sacramentoaudubon.org for more information.

**Friday, February 12th, 9am
William Pond Park on the American River Parkway
Leader: Cathie LaZier, 457-6882, empid@earthlink.net
Saturday Feb. 13, 9am**

SAS and Friends of the River Banks at Sutter's Landing (end of 28th Street at the River) for a GBBC Family count

Leaders: Julie Serences and Robert Sewell

Meet Julie and Robert at the parking lot nearest the skateboard building. Sutter's Landing Park is located at the end of 28th Street behind the B Street Theater and over the railroad tracks! 548-0618 education@sacramentoaudubon.org

**Sunday Feb 14, 9am
American River Bike Trail Near the Fish Hatchery
Leader: Marlene Ishihara 635-9758, IshIM2000@comcast.net**

Meet at the public parking lot across the street from the Dept of Fish and Game Region II Office. This lot is free; there is no parking fee. To get to the site from downtown Sacramento, go east on Hwy 50 and exit at Hazel Avenue. Go north on Hazel. Turn left on Gold Country Blvd (before Hazel Avenue Bridge). Turn right at the **second** Nimbus Road. Drive about 1/4 mile and the public parking lot is on the left. This is west of the Nimbus Fish Hatchery parking lot.

**Monday Feb 15, 9am
Mather Lake
Leader: Wayne Blunk 876-0457 wayne.blunk@worldnet.att.net**

**Field Trip for
Beginning Birders**

**Date: February 20 (alternate rain date
February 27)
Time: 8am to 2pm
Location: William Pond on the
American River**

Two of Sacramento Audubon's experienced birders will be leading a field trip for beginning birders. The outings will be 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. Cathie LaZier and Maureen Geiger have been birding in the Sacramento area for many years and enjoy sharing their knowledge with others.

Trips will be limited to 10 participants; please check with Cathie or Maureen for anyone under 14 years of age. There is a \$5 materials charge which will be collected the morning of the field trip and a \$5 parking fee (unless participants park outside the park).

Please register via email to either Cathie (empid@earthlink.net) or Maureen (mkgeiger@sbcglobal.net) or by calling Maureen at 916-444-0804 and leaving your name and phone number. Following registration, you will receive additional information regarding the field trip.

SACRAMENTO SPLASH

Nature in the Neighborhood presents a family event: It's a Hoot!

**Owls of the Sacramento Region with the California Raptor Center
Saturday, January 16: 3pm – 6pm**

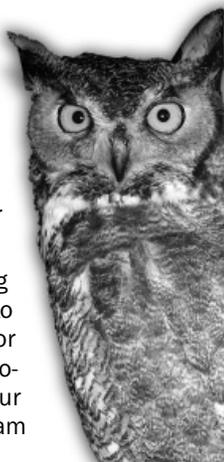
Are owls really wise? Can they swivel their heads 360-degrees around? Do all owls hoot? Owls have fascinated humans for centuries. You can find several species of owls right around the Mather area.

Join Christine Adams and Sally Reynolds of the California Raptor Center as they bring several live owls from their facility for this presentation! You can get up close and personal with spectacular live owls, including a Great-horned Owl, Barn Owl, Burrowing Owl, and a cute little Northern Saw-whet Owl!

In addition to meeting these live owls, you'll see a brief slide show that features the calls of our local owls so you can find out "who's" calling outside your window at night. Then the kids can be nature detectives and investigate what owls like to eat by dissecting sterilized owl pellets!

Following the indoor portion of the program, you'll have the option to join us for a guided walk to observe wild owls hunting in the grasslands of Mather Regional Park.

Wear good walking shoes if you plan to stay for the outdoor portion of this program. Reserve your spot early—this program is a real hoot!



*Great Horned Owl
David Rosen
Wildside Photography*

Important Information

- For more information visit www.sacsplash.org and click on "Nature in the Neighborhood"
- You may reserve a spot for this program (strongly recommended) on our website or by calling Splash at 916-364-2437.
- The Splash Education Center is located at 4426 Excelsior Rd, Mather, CA 95655. For directions, visit our website and click on "Contact Us."
- Suggested donations are \$10.00/adult and \$5.00/child (5-18). Children must be accompanied by an adult.

BIRDING MONTANA AND THE BIG SKY COUNTRY

Ed Harper will be offering one of his popular Montana tours this summer during the height of the bird migration in the eastern portions of the state, May 24-June 1, 2010. This tour will feature many of the birds of the prairies and wetlands, keying in on the migration of both eastern and western species. Sharp-tailed Grouse, White-rumped Sandpiper, Baird's Sparrow, and Sprague's Pipit are some of the many specialty birds. Tour size is being kept small to simplify logistics and to maximize the outdoor experience. For the full itinerary and price, contact Sandpiper Journeys via calidris@surewest.net or call Ed at 916-971-3311.

BIRD AND BAT HOUSE WORKSHOP

On Sunday, January 24th, join Folsom Lake College, Sacramento Audubon Society, the City of Folsom, NorCal Bat Society, and Friends of the Folsom Parkways to attend this fantastic event at Folsom Lake College. Let Julie Serences (education@sacramentoaudubon.org) know if your trail group is interested, how many will be attending, and if you would like a bird box to install on your trail segment. There also may be some bat boxes too. Blue Bird Boxes are being supplied by SAS member Ross Little. Here are more details:

- Learn about the Great Backyard Bird Count
- Learn about Birds and Bats in Folsom
- Raptor Perch and Bird and Bat Box Display
- Volunteer to install a bird/ bat box on your trail
- Hands on Nature Journaling Field Trip

The time for the workshop is from 2pm-5pm at Folsom Lake College Community Room.

WATER REFORM SIGNED INTO LAW

The meeting point of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers creates the largest delta on the west coast, and the systems that rely on the health of this delta are failing. Populations of native aquatic species have dwindled to the point that an entire food chain has been disrupted, invasive plants and animals have taken over, and water quality is badly degraded. The Delta islands have subsided as much as 20-30 feet in places, and people living on these islands are protected only by a precarious levee system.

In November of this year, the Legislature passed a series of policy bills that will begin to repair the ailing Delta and improve water management statewide under the guiding principles of two co-equal goals: providing more reliable water supply and protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem. These goals are to be accomplished in a manner that protects and enhances the unique cultural, recreational, natural resource, and agricultural values of the Delta as an evolving place.

As the Legislature drafted and debated this legislation, Audubon California repeatedly highlighted the importance of the Delta region for migratory birds and insisted on the inclusion of language protecting this habitat. As a result, the legislation specifies that no net loss of migratory bird habitat will occur in the Delta as improvements are made for aquatic species. We will continue to elevate the interests of birds and wildlife in the Delta, and in particular will carefully monitor the upcoming appointments that will greatly influence the future of the Delta.

In addition to laying out a plan for Delta restoration, the new policies seek to ease pressure on the Delta as a water supply in several ways. First, a water conservation measure requires a 20% reduction in per capita water use statewide, as well as increasing efficiency for agricultural water users. Also, for the first time, the state authorizes and provides incentives for groundwater monitoring in all of our basins. Finally, the legislation improves our water accounting system by better enforcing diversion reporting requirements and removing reporting exemptions.

The bond that accompanied this policy package includes funding for critical conservation priorities including \$1.785 billion for watershed conservation projects and \$1.5 billion for ecosystem restoration in the Delta. If approved by voters next November, the bond would provide funding for water supply for wildlife refuges, Klamath and Salton Sea restoration, climate change planning, and the California Waterfowl Habitat Program, among many other programs that will benefit California birds.

Jordan Wellwood
Central Valley/Sierra Nevada Conservation Coordinator, Audubon California

Birding Festivals

GALT, 3RD ANNUAL, WINTER BIRD FESTIVAL

The City of Galt is hosting its 3rd Annual Winter Bird Festival, Saturday January 30, 2010 at the McCaffrey Middle School facility located in Galt. The purpose of this event is to advance public awareness and conservation of the region's wildlife. Sandhill Cranes, Canada Geese, Tundra Swans, pintails, and hundreds of other birds call Galt and its surrounding cities home. The Winter Bird Festival will offer the community a chance to spend time discovering, learning, and educating themselves on the importance of these feathered creatures as well as the wetlands, agriculture, and open space which are all crucial to their survival.

Guided tours are an exciting opportunity to see the winter birds that call the Central Valley home! Hop on a bus and have your binoculars ready! This year the festival is offering a morning tour to the Cosumnes River Preserve and a children's tour developed especially for youth. For the first time they are also offering a guided tour to Stone Lakes Wildlife Refuge which is rarely open to the public. The very popular sunset tour out to Staten Island in the Delta is an amazing experience to view all the Sandhill cranes coming in to roost for the night! While all events at the main location are FREE, there is a fee for these guided tours and you must sign up in advance by January 5th. Please call (209) 366-7100 for assistance with these popular tours as time is running short.

For more information see their website at www.ci.galt.ca.us. Click on "About Galt" and then "Festivals" or call their 24 hour recorded information line at (209) 366-7220.

KLAMATH FALLS, WINTER WINGS FESTIVAL

The 31st annual Winter Wings Festival will offer three full days of activities February 12-14, 2010. Check out the website at www.WinterWingsFest.org for the latest in Festival planning information. Schedules, registration and brochures are all available on-line.

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL SAN DIEGO BIRDING FESTIVAL

The fourteenth annual San Diego Birding Festival is set for Thursday through Sunday, March 4-7, 2010. An exciting new field trip for 2010 is a behind-the-scenes look at the world-famous San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park. For the latest information and to register, visit www.sandiegoaudubon.org and click on the Bird Festival tab, or email birdfest@cox.net. For more information and for a brochure to be mailed, call (619) 682-7200.

FIRST ANNUAL POINT REYES BIRDING FESTIVAL

Plan now to attend the first annual Point Reyes Birding Festival, April 23-25, 2010. The event is sponsored by the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin.

Point Reyes and the West Marin area are home to one of the most diverse bird populations in North America. April is a great time to see and hear breeding birds, and to admire shore birds and waterfowl (and many other species) on their way north.

Top bird experts like David Wimpfheimer, Keith Hansen, and Jules Evens will lead participants on trips to discover the best birding sites in the region. Displays and exhibits will expand your bird knowledge. The event will also feature other walks to see the West Marin natural world, including the famous wildflower displays, butterflies, and more.

Go to www.eacmarin.org to learn more about this exciting event. We look forward to seeing you at the start of what we are sure will be a great annual tradition.

YELLOW-BILLED MAGPIE NAMED AUDUBON CALIFORNIA'S 2009 BIRD OF THE YEAR

The Yellow-billed Magpie, a bird well known to bird enthusiasts, but perhaps not to most Californians, today was named the 2009 Audubon California Bird of the Year after it received nearly 26 percent of votes cast during an online poll this fall. The Yellow-billed Magpie lives only in California's Central Valley and coastal ranges, and may be enjoying a comeback after experiencing major declines due to habitat loss, West Nile Virus and pesticide use.

Audubon California created the designation this year to highlight the state's remarkable birds and the conservation challenges many of them face. The recognition specifically sought to recognize bird species that were of significant conservation interest in 2009, but that also had a compelling story and rallied the public around it.

Voters had the choice of selecting one of six birds nominated by the Audubon California Board of Directors, or writing in their own candidate. The Yellow-billed Magpie was one of the six nominated birds along with the California Condor, Brown Pelican, Western Snowy Plover, Peregrine Falcon and Acorn Woodpecker. The California Condor came in second place with about 19 percent of the vote, while the Western Snowy Plover came in third with about 16 percent.

Of special note to SAS members was that the Purple Martin received the most votes of any write-in candidate mainly due to our efforts. A "moral victory" spearheaded by Purple Martin advocate and researcher, Dan Airola.

Sacramento Audubon Chapter Board Meetings

Board Meetings of the Sacramento Audubon Society are held the last Tuesday of the month. The next meeting will be held on January 26, 2010 at 7pm at the SMUD Building, 6301 S Street, Sacramento.

SAS NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to these
new members:

Leslie Clarke
Carl Handen
Rachel Kleinberg
Joyce E Sweeney
Robert Thomas
Roger VanderPlaats
Sally M Walters

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!

Thanks to the following for their generous donations:

Grant Boice, Maria Nicholas Kelly and Lachlan McClenahan to the **General Fund**.

Joellen Arnold, Rachel Kleinberg, Peggy Goldstein and Jane Taylor to the **Conservation and Education Fund**.

An American River Journal now available at SAS General Meetings

As reported in last month's *Observer*, the American River Natural History Association (ARNHA) has published *An American River Journal*, in memory of Jo Glasson Smith, ARNHA co-founder, longtime Sacramento Audubon member and bird-bander, and gifted artist. Her drawings of the flora and fauna along the Lower American River are featured in the little volume, along with essays by Peter Hayes, ARNHA associate board member and coordinator of the "Field Trip Findings" column in *The Observer*.



In addition to honoring Smith, ARNHA is publishing the book as part of ongoing fund-raising efforts on behalf of the county's Effie Yeaw Nature Center, which has suffered a 50 percent budget cut this year. The book sells for \$9.75, and is on sale at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center, ARNHA.org, and at selected book stores as well as at SAS general meetings.

JOIN THE SACRAMENTO AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

Sacramento Audubon Society Membership Application

Lea Landry, Membership Chair

11054 Autumnwind Lane, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670-4224

llandry@softcom.net (916) 638-1141

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

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Total Enclosed \$ _____

Make checks payable to Sacramento Audubon Society

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Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP + 4 _____

Email _____

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

Observations continued from page 10

We are now featuring photos of some of the highlight birds on the Sacramento Audubon Web site (<http://sacramentoaudubon.org/activities/recent sightings>).

Many of these reports first appeared on the Central Valley Bird Club Listserv. Visit www.cvbirds.org and click "Listserv" for details. With nearly 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:

Dan Brown, Matthew Dodder, Steve Hampton, Lauren Harter, Dan Kopp, Sami LaRocca, Don Marsh, Jeff McCreary, Frances Oliver, Ed Pandolfino, Diane Rose, Steve Rose, Jennifer Rycenga, Zach Smith, John Sterling, Craig Swolgaard, John Trochet, David Vander Pluym, Liz West, 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

The most intriguing report of the month was of an immature **Wood Stork** on 11/1 flying over the Sutter National Wildlife Refuge. It was not refunded. On the same day at Lake Natoma, a **Common Loon** and four **Horned Grebes** were seen. At this site and nearby Folsom Lake, both species are regularly found in winter, but extremely difficult to find elsewhere in Sacramento County. Always a nice find, but especially so in the low foothills of Amador County, a **Eurasian Wigeon** was seen on 11/28 at Goffinet Reservoir east of Ione. A **Redhead** was at Cosumnes River Preserve (CRP) on 11/20 during the Central Valley Birding Symposium, and up to three were present at the Sacramento County Bufferlands during the first half of the month among about 2,000 **Canvasbacks**.

A **Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk** was reported regularly from the Symposium onward north of Lodi along Thornton Rd, just north of Peltier Rd, to the east of I-5. Another was reported in Yolo County along Rd 31 to the west of Davis. One to two **Merlins** took up residence along the American River Parkway between the Gristmill and Watt accesses.

There were a number of notable finds at CRP this month. A well-described **Yellow-shafted Northern Flicker** on 11/3 is near the top of the list. We expect lingering **Black-throated Gray Warblers** and **Townsend's Warblers**, often through the CBCs, but a **Hermit Warbler** that persisted at Cosumnes River Preserve through

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11/11 was more of a surprise. There was also a very late **Wilson's Warbler** on 11/1. A **Dusky Flycatcher** was a very nice find, continuing from 11/7-11. There were single **Swamp Sparrow** reports from CRP on 11/11 and 11/13. At both CRP and the Sacramento County Bufferlands, there were at least four separate **White-**

throated Sparrows at each location. A **White-throated Sparrow** was also found at the chronically underbirded Bobelaine Sanctuary on 11/4-7. Eleven **Purple Finches** at CRP on 11/13 was a very nice total for the Valley floor.

An **American Dipper** returned to its traditional spot along Putah Creek at the Hwy 128 bridge to the west of Winters. More unusual were regular reports of one to two dippers on the Mokelumne River below the Camanche Dam beginning on 10/24 and continuing through November. A **Townsend's Solitaire** was at the same site on 11/12. Other interesting reports include a second-year **Western Gull** at the Davis Wetlands on 11/20 and an early adult **Glaucous Gull** at the Yolo County Landfill beginning on 11/1. A late **Hammond's Flycatcher** was found at White's Slough on 11/27, a **Sage Thrasher** was seen at the nearby Lodi Sewage Ponds on 11/6, and a **Grasshopper Sparrow** was found along Woodbridge Rd on 11/21—always a good find in winter and anywhere away from the known isolated breeding areas.

Observations continued on page 9

Sacramento Audubon Society Information

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

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