



The *OBSERVER*

Sacramento Audubon Society

General Meeting

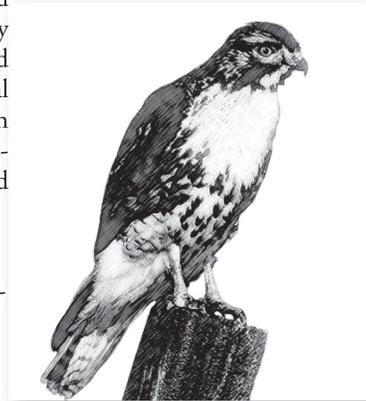
Thursday, March 17, 2011
Shepard Garden and Arts Center
7pm General Meeting

Winter Raptors of the Central Valley Ed Pandolfino and Zack Smith

After a checkered and inconsistent college experience that included dropping out and touring Europe as a drummer for a rock and roll band, Ed Pandolfino finally settled down and earned a Ph.D. in Biochemistry and spent over twenty years working in various management positions in the medical device industry until his growing obsession with birds helped inspire him to retire early. Ed is on the board of Sierra Foothills Audubon Society and is Vice-president of Western Field Ornithologists. He serves as a Regional Editor for Northern California for North American Birds and is on the editorial committee of the Central Valley Bird Club Bulletin.

Zach Smith grew up in San Diego and spent much of his youth honing his soccer skills. A move to Davis for college, eventually introduced him to the world of science, particularly raptors. After graduation, he embarked on a life of vagrancy as a free-lance field biologist that has led him to many wild parts of California, the Gulf coast of Texas, the southern New Jersey shore, Chile's Atacama desert, the humid lowlands of Veracruz and the Canary Islands, among other locales. Currently, Zach works at the Montezuma Hills Wind Resource Area and lives in Davis, with his wife, Elizabeth.

If you are looking for the ideal location to experience North American raptors in stunning numbers and variety, you are already there. California's Central Valley is, arguably, the most important site for wintering raptors on the continent. The abundance and diversity of hawks in our area in winter is simply extraordinary. Despite this, relatively little research has been done on the Valley's wintering raptors and we know little about the way these birds use various Central Valley habitats. Given the rapid conversion of the Central Valley's



Red-tailed Hawk
Ed Harper

2011 GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT TAKING PLACE AS THE OBSERVER GOES TO PRESS CHECK THE RESULTS AT BIRDSOURCE.ORG

This year the Great Backyard Bird Count hasn't taken place yet and the Observer is ready for press so you'll have to follow the results online at birdsource.org/gbbc/. I hope you're out there participating so we can have the wonderful numbers of birds and participants that we had last year. If not, you can still join Project Feederwatch and contribute to ongoing research. Just click on the link (at birdsource.org) to Project Feederwatch if you want to get involved.

open spaces to urban and intense agricultural uses, it is crucial that we understand how these birds are using this landscape in order to create effective conservation plans. In 2006 Ed and Zack began work on a project to survey the Valley's wintering raptors and determine the key habitat associations of each species. Under the auspices of the Central Valley Bird Club and with help from volunteers throughout the region, they created 19 survey routes from Shasta County in the north to Kings County in the south and collected data on raptors for three consecutive winters. Data was collected from nearly 21,000 raptor observations covering 19 raptor species (plus Turkey Vultures and Loggerhead Shrikes). Ed will present some of the key findings on important habitat associations for several of these species and discuss the conservation implications.

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.

Sally Walters, Program Chair

Field Trip Findings

Isenberg Crane Preserve/Cosumnes River Preserve Boardwalk (2/15) — Leader Dan Tankersley reported: “Only 44 species were observed; however, our party of six enjoyed birding despite the cold and steady south wind that greeted us at both of our destinations. At the areas we visited at both the Isenberg and Cosumnes River Preserves (CRP), the Sandhill Crane numbers were way down from last month, with only about 100 individuals observed. Most waterfowl species were down as well, but this turned into a very nice day for raptors. Our highlights included a Prairie Falcon that flew low across Woodbridge Road directly in front of our vehicle, an early dark morph Swainson’s Hawk at CRP, and a dark Harlan’s Hawk spotted by Linda Pittman on the northeast side of the Peltier and Thornton Roads intersection. Other highlights were several Wilson’s Snipe and a flock of 75 Black-necked Stilt huddled together in the pond directly across Franklin Road from the main parking area at CRP.”

Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge (2/13) — Leader Tim Fitzer reported: “It was a sunny and beautiful day, what a day to go to Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge! Our group was treated to 6 Bald Eagles, a Peregrine Falcon, Great Horned Owl, Eurasian Wigeon, Ringed-necked Ducks, a Merlin and 3 Burrowing Owls on our return route. It was a fun day and a fun time for all.”

Beginning Birders Trip (2/12) — John Huls, Cathie LaZier and Darrell Mohr were the leaders on this beginning birder trip at William Pond Park. Cathie reported “Common Goldeneye and Common Mergansers were on the river, and Red-shouldered Hawks were actively checking out nest sites. Emily Perry enjoyed the contrast between Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks overhead. We all enjoyed scope looks at the Great Blue Heron rookery, and a Red-breasted Sapsucker was a treat. Anne Bourget’s sharp eye spotted several species, and the day ended with quite a flurry of Lark Sparrows, Western Bluebirds, Dark-eyed Juncos, and Yellow-rumped Warblers all feeding in the grass as we made our day’s bird list, which totaled 46 species.”

Lake Solano and Monticello Dam (2/12) — Leader Dan Williams reported: “Nine of us had incredible weather and numerous great birds. At Lake Solano County Park

the waterfowl didn’t disappoint with several Hooded and Common Mergansers, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, and American Wigeon. A Black-throated Gray Warbler in the boat ramp picnic area was a pleasant surprise, and several Phainopeplas as well as singing Brown Creepers gave us great views.

“The woodpeckers and raptors put on quite a show at this park. Lewis’s Woodpeckers were a nice surprise, and a Red-breasted Sapsucker put in an appearance. Late in the morning a young Golden Eagle drifted over and became one of the major highlights of the day, as well as a soaring Merlin, Cooper’s, Sharp-shinned, and the always present (and very vocal) Red-shouldered Hawks. Two Barn Owls flushed and gave us brief looks at the west end of the campground.

“At Monticello Dam we were treated to a 3rd Year Bald Eagle flyover which drew the ire of a pair of Peregrine Falcons on the cliffs above! Below the dam we were able to spot the often-times elusive American Dipper actively feeding in the swift current. Heading back east along Putah Creek, we stopped at a couple of access points and added Chestnut-backed Chickadee, White-throated Swift, Hairy Woodpecker, and Hutton’s Vireo to the list.”

Yuba County Wetlands (2/6) — Leader Richard Barbieri reported: “Driving the back roads west of Lincoln we saw a splattering of most common ducks, Greater White-fronted Geese and Tundra Swans. At a brief stop we were treated to Downy Woodpecker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Black-throated Gray Warbler and Brown Creeper. At the duck club more of the same including Ring-necked Ducks, Loggerhead Shrike, Wilson’s Snipes, and Marsh Wrens. The day’s total wasn’t great due to the north wind but, we had three adult and two immature Bald Eagles.”

Lincoln Grasslands (2/5) — Leader Scott Hoppe reported: “On a truly wonderful birding day, 16 birders tallied an impressive 98 species. The weather was cooperative with mild temperatures, sun and partial clouds. The predicted winds did not materialize until afternoon, and then it was only moderately windy.

Raptors were the highlight of the day, with a total of 12 species, including 5 Ferruginous Hawks, 5 Bald Eagles, 2 Golden Eagles and 2 Merlin. We also tallied

12 species of duck, a single Eurasian Wigeon on the pond on Gladding Road being the highlight. The pond also produced a raft of Cackling Geese.

We counted 6 species of woodpecker, of which Lewis’s Woodpecker and Red-breasted Sapsucker were the standouts. Later in the day, the group was impressed by the thousands of White-fronted, Snow and Ross’s Geese in the wetlands to the west of Lincoln. All in all a very enjoyable day for all participants.”

Rush Ranch and King Ranch, Solano County (1/30) — Leader Maureen Geiger reported: “In spite of the pouring rain all day, 4 of us had a great trip to Rush and King Ranches in Solano County. It was a day of raptor heaven with Golden Eagles, Ferruginous, Red-tailed and Rough-legged hawks, Prairie and Peregrine falcons and kestrels, kites and harriers, and Burrowing and Barn Owls. Really wonderful. At one point the Golden Eagle was sitting on the hill in front of us drying its soggy wings—just gorgeous, and not a camera in sight!”

Tonzi Road, Amador County (1/29) — Leader Gary Fregien reported: “Twelve birders made this trip to the foothills of Amador County taking in wooded hills, streamside riparian, a stock pond, the lone waste water treatment plant, the Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery, and Camanche Lake. The woodlands and riparian habitats produced passerines and corvids including Acorn Woodpecker, Common Raven, Oak Titmouse, Bushtit, White-breasted Nuthatch, Western Bluebird, Phainopepla, Lark Sparrow, both and Lesser Goldfinch. The stock pond harbored Gadwall, American Wigeon, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead and Double-crested Cormorant. A Red-breasted Sapsucker was also seen here. The lone sewer ponds added Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser and Ruddy Duck, as well as Red-shouldered Hawk, American Kestrel, California Quail, Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Ring-billed, California and Herring gulls, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, Nuttall’s Woodpecker and Black Phoebe. The fish hatchery was the lunch stop, and while eating we watched a Belted Kingfisher. On our walk after lunch out to and along the river, we saw Spotted and California Towhee, and then it got interesting. Close observation of a flock of Bushtits revealed Hutton’s

Vireo and Golden-crowned Kinglet. On the walk back to the parking lot, we saw one Varied Thrush, as well as Western Meadowlark. On the drive to Camanche Lake we saw Loggerhead Shrike and Say's Phoebe. We entered Camanche Lake at the North Shore access and drove out to overlooks along the lake. The water level was low, making the shore a considerable distance away. Still, we picked up American White Pelican, and five other species. We also stopped to observe a small flock of Northern Flicker foraging on the ground. One of them turned out to be an intergrade between Red- and Yellow-shafted. At our final overlook stop, we puzzled for awhile over a "hawk" sitting on an island strip a few hundred feet offshore. When it finally revealed its face, one astute observer recognized the distinctive facial disk of the Northern Harrier. Sometime later it flew away, now revealing its white rump patch for further confirmation. While attending to our species list tally, another observant birder scoped a Common Loon far out on the lake, making our total for the day 70 species."

Isenberg Crane Preserve/Cosumnes River Preserve Boardwalk (1/25) — Leader Tim Fitzer reported: "It was foggy and we couldn't see at Woodbridge Rd so we drove back to Cosumnes River Preserve and the fog lifted. Highlights were, Blue-winged Teal, adult Bald Eagle flyover, Sandhill Cranes, Wilson's Snipe, and an Osprey. Many species of ducks and shorebirds were close and quite tame, making for great viewing."

Road 113, Robinson Road and Birds Landing Area (1/22) — Leader Paul Cordero reported: "A group of about a dozen birders spent a cold, foggy morning and a sunny early afternoon in search of wintering species along Robinson Rd and Birds Landing Area. Highlights included Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk, dozens of Red-tailed Hawks, Tricolored Blackbird, and Say's Phoebe. In addition to the reliable spot over the bridge, Tim Fitzer was able to spot a Burrowing Owl in a location where they had not been seen before. Bruce Webb was kind enough to bring along several scopes to make for a fun day of birding."

San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex (1/22) — Leader Gary Fregien reported: "The trip from Sacramento to the refuges by 10 hardy birders became progressively grimmer the farther south we ventured, due to heavy tule fog. As we approached the area of the first planned

stop on Santa Fe Grade Rd at the San Luis NWR, we drove out of the fog bank, almost as if by miracle. Santa Fe Grade Rd. produced many species of waterfowl, several Wilson's Snipe, Long-billed Curlew, Willet, Loggerhead Shrike, Red-tailed Hawk, a Golden Eagle and a couple of Great-tailed Grackles. On the auto tour route within San Luis NWR, we had views of several Tule Elk bulls; with their still present antlers majestically framed in thinning fog. We stopped for a short walk out to the viewing platform, but from the lot before going we saw five species of raptors. From the platform we again saw many waterfowl, including Tundra Swans. The circuitous return to the parking lot afforded us some riparian species, including Belted Kingfisher, Downy Woodpecker, Tree Swallow, Bushtit, Marsh Wren, Common Yellowthroat, Spotted Towhee, Song Sparrow, American Goldfinch and, heard before being seen, a lone California Thrasher, which turned out to be a life species for a couple in the group. The Merced NWR added to our count of waterfowl, the most numerous of which were Ross's and Snow Geese, and Greater White-fronted Goose. We also picked up several new shorebirds, including Black-bellied Plover, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Least Sandpiper, Dunlin and Long-billed Dowitcher. We saw Sandhill Cranes, but in numbers lower than anticipated. We also saw at least five Great Horned Owls, poised to take advantage of the numerous brush rabbits. We bid farewell to the refuge at dusk, adding White-tailed Kite to our list before departing. We tallied 77 species on the day."

Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area (1/18) — Leader Marlene Ishihara reported: "Fifteen birders were able to enjoy a beautiful sunny day at the Bypass. No fog. We started the tour with a drive to the new eastern extension, which opened last fall for bird watching. Close views of hundreds of Dunlins and Least Sandpipers with a single Long-billed Curlew were seen. Ring-billed and Herring gulls were loafing at the edges of the shallow pond. Thanks to DFG Wildlife Area Manager Dave Feliz for opening this new section to birders. It gives us a chance to see more shorebirds during migration. Other birds seen on the auto loop were American Wigeon, Bufflehead, American Bittern, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Cooper's Hawk, Horned Larks, and Great Horned Owl. Many flocks of Greater White-fronted and Snow Geese, Tundra Swans and Sandhill

Cranes were heard and seen. Another good morning at the Bypass."

Gray Lodge (1/16) — Cathie LaZier, co-leader with Linda Pittman, reported: "Twenty-three birders joined us for a good day's birding at Gray Lodge. Karen Zumwalt quickly found an American Bittern which stayed in view hunting. Four White Pelicans entertained the group with their synchronized feeding. Carolyn Woodruff brought four teen-agers whom she is coaching for the Ornithology section of the Science Olympiad, and they found us California Quail and Common Yellowthroat. All the common ducks were there, plus Eurasian Wigeon and Blue-winged Teal. We added birds on the drive home around the Sutter Buttes, including a Merlin feeding on a sparrow and three Bald Eagles. The day's total was 82 species."

Tall Forest, Cosumnes River Preserve (1/15) — Leader John Trochet reported these highlights among 90 or so listed birds: Snow Goose (blue morph), Eurasian Wigeon, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon on the Bruceville Road microwave tower in the early afternoon, Western Sandpiper, 30 Yellow-billed Magpie, Common Raven, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Varied Thrush. Waterfowl conditions were excellent. Bad misses included Canada Goose and American Robin, Chris Conard filled in for John Trochet for the November and December Cosumnes River Preserve Tall Forest Bird Surveys while John was doing research in Indonesia (Sulawesi).

"On Nov 14 (not the 13th) nobody showed up at the meeting site at 6:15, so I was solo. Best for the date was a Hermit Warbler (first year) along Wood Duck Slough adjacent to north end of main forest as well as two Townsend's Warblers. It was an odd day, with few wrens and crowned sparrows, but a lot of Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Fox Sparrows, and Hermit Thrushes, and a few Varied Thrushes. A large buck was in the road to the equipment pad (looked like four points on both sides, but it was still quite dark). I ended with 68 species of birds.

"On Dec 12, I was solo again on the Cosumnes River Preserve Tall Forest Bird Count. This was not surprising, since I announced that there would be a long walk from Bruceville Rd. to the forest due to wet roads. Like last month, wrens and sparrows, except for fox, were in low numbers. Best for the date were two Townsend's Warblers, a Black-throated

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Field Trips



White-faced Ibis
Kirsten Munson

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 Richard Barbieri, 966-4603, offleash56@yahoo.com for trips through March 5th. For trips from March 6th through April 13th call the scheduler Mark Martucci, 833-6722 matuchbirdman@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.

Thursday, March 3, 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. Note: trip will be canceled if bypass is closed due to flooding.

Saturday, March 5, 8am

North Fork Pleasant Grove Creek (Roseville area)

Leader: Scott Dietrich, 208-4976
sed25@csus.edu

The North Fork Pleasant Grove open space area is a river flood plain area scattered with old growth Valley Oaks, riparian habitat and a small wetlands area. It's usually a great place to see raptors such as Barn Owl, American Kestrel, Red-tailed Hawk, White-tailed Kite, Red-shouldered Hawk and Cooper's Hawk. Also present are some waterfowl including Wood Duck, Mallard, and often Hooded and Common Merganser. Also seen here are Great Egret, Great Blue Heron and Green Heron. Of course there will still be many winter birds, Northern Flicker, sparrows and finches as well as the resident oak habitat birds, Acorn and Nuttall's Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Oak Titmouse and Western

Bluebird.

Meet Scott at Paul Dugan Park in the northeast part of Roseville. In Roseville drive north on Woodcreek Oaks Blvd past Blue Oaks Blvd; then turn right onto Diamond Woods Circle and drive a short distance; Paul Dugan Park will be on your right. Or, coming from Sacramento, take I-80 east to Hwy 65; take 65 north to Blue Oaks Blvd; take Blue Oaks Blvd west to Woodcreek Oaks Blvd, and go north on Woodcreek Oaks to Diamond Woods, then right to Paul Dugan Park. (Thomas Bros Map 219 D1, for those without Internet!) This newer area for Sacramento Audubon trips will be of interest to beginning and more experienced birders.

Sunday, March 6, 7am

Highway 37 and Ellis Creek, Petaluma
Leader: Mark Martucci, 833-6722
matuchbirdman@yahoo.com

From the West Sacramento Park and Ride, Mark will lead the group towards Petaluma, with various birding stops along Hwy 37. Moving on to Ellis Creek (near Schollenberger Park), he'll look for Blue-winged Teal and a variety of other waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, Common Yellowthroat and the occasional rail and possibly a Peregrine Falcon. Bring lunch and liquids and layered clothing. Meet Mark at 7am at the Park and Ride off I-80 in West Sacramento. From Sacramento, take the West Capitol Ave Exit #81; turn left at the light and then left again into the Park and Ride lot. This is a great trip for both beginning and more experienced birders.

Saturday, March 12

ARNHA Bird and Breakfast
Fund Raiser

Effie Yeaw Nature Center, 489-4918

Join Sacramento Audubon leaders for a birding walk followed by a delicious breakfast. This fund raiser for the American River Natural History Association is an annual event, and the leaders usually find nesting Anna's Hummingbirds and Bushtits. Various woodpeckers and other small woodland birds, as well as herons, egrets and waterfowl on the river, will also be seen. Red-shouldered Hawks are frequently found in the oak woodland. This fund raiser supports ARNHA's educational work. For sign-up information and price phone the Nature Center at 489-4918.

Saturday, March 12

Beginning Birding Field Trip for adults
William Pond Park

Limited to 10 people; registration required

This field trip is for people who aren't entirely comfortable joining field trips as well as those who have birded a bit but would like to be better birders. A brief parking lot talk will focus on choice and use of binoculars and a brief overview of birding etiquette and ethics. A \$5 donation is requested to cover the costs of hand-out materials.

The field trip will focus on finding and identifying common birds in a variety of habitats and will be led by two or more experienced Sacramento Audubon trip leaders. Each trip is limited to 10 participants. Register via email to Cathie at empid@earthlink.net, (put "Beginning Birder" in the subject line), giving your name, phone number and email address, or by calling Cathie at (916) 457-6882 and leaving your name and phone number. Following registration you will receive additional information regarding the field trip.

Sunday, March 13, 8am
(Note: Daylight Savings Time begins today.)

Effie Yeaw Nature Center
Cathie LaZier, 457-6882
empid@earthlink.net

This area of the parkway is excellent for birding and Cathie will be looking for early nesting birds and returning migrants, as well as blooming wildflowers. This is a very good trip for beginners, as well as more experienced birders. Meet in the Nature Center parking lot in Ancil Hoffman Park in Fair Oaks. The trip will end by noon. A Sac County Park Pass or \$5 entry fee is required for all vehicles.

FAMILY FRIENDLY TRIP!!!

Saturday, March 19
Hagan Park, Rancho Cordova

This trip is full; to be notified of future Family Friendly trips email Maureen Geiger at mkggeiger@sbcglobal.net.

Saturday, March 19, 8am
Hansen Ranch Park Preserve
(North Natomas Area)

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

Join Richard in a leisurely walk on the dike above the pond that overlooks the preserve. The habitat is mainly marsh but also has open fields and a tree line in the distance, which hosts a heron and egret rookery in the spring. This is a great area for raptors, rails and late wintering waterfowl. This is a good trip for beginners and will last about three hours. Meet at Main and the south end of Kelton Way at 8am. There are no restroom facilities.

Sunday, March 20, 7:30am
Mather Field Park
Leader: Wayne Blunk, 876-0457
wayne.blunk@gmail.com

Mather Lake is one of Wayne's favorite birding locations. The lake and its surrounding grasslands host a wide variety of birds. Great-tailed Grackle and Yellow-headed Blackbirds both nest at the lake. Meet Wayne in the parking lot of Mather Regional Park at the corner of Douglas Road and Eagle's Nest Road for this morning trip. A Sac County Park Pass or \$5 entry fee is required for all vehicles.

Wednesday, March 23, 8am
River Bend Park
Leader: Cathie LaZier, 457-6882
empid@earthlink.net

Meet Cathie in the first parking lot on your right, just past the entrance kiosk. We'll walk through the oak woodland, looking for wrens, nuthatches and other small birds with young, also nesting Red-shouldered Hawks and possibly some other birds still in nests. We should also find some spring wildflowers and Pipevine Swallowtail butterflies. This is a good trip for beginners, and will end before noon. From Folsom Blvd., between Bradshaw and Mather Field Road, take Rod Beaudry Drive north into the park, (formerly called Goethe Park). A Sac County Park Pass or \$5 entry fee is required for all vehicles.

Saturday, March 26, 8am
Yolo Basin Wildlife Area
Leaders: Don Schmoltdt 739-6465
Sally Walters 710-1077
Bajaowl@surewest.net

Meet Don and Sally in the first parking lot (Lot A) on your left at the beginning of the auto tour of the Yolo Wildlife Area. Depending on the extent of flooded fields, there may be good numbers of shorebirds and waterfowl. Tricolored and Yellow-headed Blackbirds are also a good possibility. 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.

Sunday, March 27, 8:30am
Cosumnes River Preserve
Leader: Brian Gilmore, 451-9146
bgilmore71@sbcglobal.net

Join Brian at this Nature Conservancy area 20 minutes south of Sacramento. He will search the ponds and fields on Desmond and Franklin Roads for waterfowl, shorebirds and raptors. Walks along the boardwalk, bridge and trail areas should turn up other interesting species in this rich riparian area. Meet Brian at the Visitor Center parking lot on Franklin Blvd. From Sacramento, take I-5 south to Twin Cities Road, (Exit #498); go left (east) about 1 mile 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.

Saturday, April 2, 6:30am
Mitchell Ravine (Carnegie SVRA)
(Alameda and San Joaquin Cos.)
Leader: Gary Fregien, 708-0636
calaveri@sbcglobal.net

This new trip is a special accommodation to Sacramento Audubon and an invitation to visit an area normally off limits to the public. Participation is limited to 10 people, and an RSVP is required, not later than March 28, 2011. We will be guided by park environmental staff on this trip to the Coast Range between Tracy and Livermore. Although this park is dedicated to off-highway vehicle recreation, Mitchell Ravine is a non-riding area isolated from the rest of the park, and is characterized by steep, rugged canyons, rolling wooded, grassy and brush covered hills, and dry rocky washes, offering habitats suited to a wide variety of birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Cassin's Kingbird nests within the park, as do more common birds including Western Kingbird, Common Raven, Loggerhead Shrike, California Thrasher, and Greater Roadrunner. Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, Sage and Rufous-crowned Sparrow and several species of hummingbirds are among the approximately 138 bird species recorded in the park. Tule Elk, Coyote and Bobcat are also frequently seen. We will hike easy-to-moderate trails. Meet Gary at the Park and Ride on the east side of Hwy 99 near Sheldon Rd. Take Hwy 99 south from Sacramento to the Sheldon Road exit. The new off ramp here cloverleaf's and then crosses over the freeway. After crossing proceed to the second signal light; turn right on East Stockton Blvd and proceed about a ¼ mile to the lot. Travel time to the park is about 1½ hours. Bring food and water.

Sunday, April 3 8am
Sailor Bar, American River Parkway
Leader: Mark Martucci, 833-6722
matuchbirdman@yahoo.com

Join Mark for a morning walk checking out the resident birds, and looking for early nesters and spring migrants. Meet Mark at the boat launch parking area at the very end of the entrance road. This is a good trip for beginners. Sailor Bar is at the south end of Illinois Avenue, off Winding Way, just west of Hazel. A Sac County Park Pass or \$5 entry fee is required for all vehicles.

Wednesday, April 6, 8:30am
Yolo Wildlife Area
Leader: Marlene Ishihara, 635-9758
IshiM2000@comcast.net

Meet Marlene in the first parking lot on your left (Lot A) as you enter the Wildlife area. Depending on the extent of the flooded fields on the auto tour route, there may be good numbers of shorebirds, American

Field Trips continued on page 6

Field Trips continued from page 5

Avocets and Black-necked Stilts. Tricolored Blackbirds and Yellow-headed Blackbirds are also possible. This is a good trip for both beginning and experienced birders. Bring scopes and FRS radios if you have them. From Sacramento, take I-80 west, take the first exit (#78, E. Chiles/Rd 32A) at the west end of the Yolo Causeway. Turn right at the stop sign, go under the freeway, make a left up onto the levee, then drop down into the Wildlife Area.

Saturday, April 9
Beginning Birding Field Trip for adults
William Pond Park
Limited to 10 people; registration required

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Saturday, April 9, 7am
Caswell Memorial State Park
Leader: Gary Fregien, 708-0636
calaveri@sbcglobal.net

Caswell Memorial State Park near Ripon in the Central Valley is located along the meandering Stanislaus River and affords a combination of water, mature cottonwood riparian and valley oak woodland vegetation. Its multi-level tall tree canopy, low scrubs and vines provide lush cover, nesting and foraging habitat, and is a magnet for a variety of resident and migrant bird species. Passerines, including several species of swallows, sparrows, woodpeckers and warblers are park specialties in spring and summer, and Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, and Great Horned Owls nest here. The park is surrounded by ag lands, so Swainson's Hawks are seen regularly.

California Thrasher and Wrentit, not that common on the valley floor except in riparian areas, are also here. Trails are generally level, but the paths and vegetation along them may be damp. Dress appropriately, and bring food and water as the trip will last into afternoon. Meet at the Park and Ride on the east side of Hwy 99 near Sheldon Rd. Take Hwy 99 south from Sacramento to the Sheldon Road exit. The new off ramp here cloverleaf's and then crosses over the freeway. After crossing proceed to the second signal light; turn right on East Stockton Blvd and proceed about a ¼ mile to the lot. Caswell is about an hour south of Sacramento and there is a day-use fee. For more information about the park go to www.parks.ca.gov.

Saturday, April 9, 1:30pm – 3:30pm
Bufferlands Birds and Blooms Tour
A Creek Week Trip

The Fishhead Lake mitigation wetland is a nice example of wetlands created as mitigation for earlier wetland losses. The wetland has both a permanent and seasonal component as well as a surrounding upland buffer. Thousands of waterfowl winter at the wetland and many remain year-round to nest and raise young. Much of the area is planted to native wildflowers that bloom in early spring. California poppies, lupines, owl's clover, baby blue-eyes, and many others can be seen spreading about the uplands and wetland edges. Visitors will receive a packet of native flower seeds to start their own native garden. The meeting location is weather-dependant, so please contact Roger Jones (preferably via email jonesro@sacsewer.com, (916) 875-9174) the week preceding the event for exact meeting location and directions.

Sunday, April 10, 8am
Sacramento Bar
American River Parkway
Leader: Paul Cordero, email preferred
pkcordero@gmail.com, 454-4061

Paul will lead you on a morning walk along the American River. You will see a nice variety of resident birds and maybe a few early spring migrants. This is a great trip for beginning and more experienced birders. 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.

Wednesday, April 13, 9am – noon
Phoenix Field
Leader: Jerry Towner, 773-5396
jtownerj@aol.com

Join Jerry at Phoenix field (Jim David Park) for a walk around the beautiful vernal pools. This trip will feature rare plants and spring blooms in and around the pools. Jerry will lend his expertise in identifying these unusual plants. Phoenix Field is located on Sunset Blvd just east of Hazel Ave. Don't forget your binoculars to view both plants and resident birds. Heavy rain will cancel the trip.

Farallon Islands *Boat Trip*

SAVE THIS DATE!

SUNDAY, JULY 10, 2011

As part of our usual field trip series, Sacramento Audubon Society (SAS) is sponsoring a trip off the coast of San Francisco to the Farallon Islands. We'll travel out the Golden Gate and cruise around Southeast Farallon Island, one of San Francisco's "desert islands" and part of the Point Reyes-Farallon Islands Marine Sanctuary. We'll be on the "Salty Lady", the same boat we've chartered many times in the past.

This will be the 21st year SAS has sponsored this trip, and every year is different! It's a great trip to see new birds to add to your life list. We should see many species that are usually only seen offshore or as a tiny speck in your scope from the shore! Highlights from previous trips include Cassin's and Rhinoceros Auklets, Pigeon Guillemot, Tufted Puffin, Black-Footed Albatross, Brown Booby, Sooty Shearwater, three species of cormorants, and Northern Fulmar. A naturalist will give a brief pre-departure lecture and will be with us all day to answer questions and provide information on the Islands and the wildlife.

The boat departs Sausalito promptly at 8am and returns about 3:30pm. The pre-trip lecture starts promptly at 7:30am. The trip cost is \$90; the trip is limited to the first 30 people that sign up, so sign up early to reserve your spot. Sign up deadline is June 15.

Detailed instructions, maps, and pre-trip information will be provided once you reserve your space. Look for the reservation form in next month's *Observer*. In the meantime, contact Linda Pittman, pittmanl@frontiernet.net, (email preferred) or phone (916) 715-1876 for further information.

BIRDING MONTANA: THE EASTERN PRAIRIES AND WETLANDS

Ed Harper still has a couple of spots available on his popular Montana tour this summer. It takes place during the height of the bird migration in the eastern portions of the state, May 23-31, 2011. 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, Sprague's Pipit and Mourning Warbler 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) 704-7954.

ANOTHER CHANCE FOR EAST AFRICA IN 2011

Because of some emergency cancellations, Ed Harper has announced there are now a few openings for the Tanzania safari he and Susan Scott are leading July 1 - 15, 2011. Drawing on their many years of experience, Ed and Susan have designed a highly productive itinerary. Camps and lodges have been carefully chosen to maximize the wildlife viewing experience. This friendly and inviting country is very safe and has some of the best wildlife viewing opportunities in all of Africa. Another's loss is your gain!

For more information for prices and itineraries, contact Ed at calidris@surewest.net or call him at (916) 971-3311 or (916) 704-7954.

SHOW THAT YOU CARE VOLUNTEER FOR CREEK WEEK 2011!

A variety of activities will be offered to support a healthy creek system: trash and debris removal, removing invasive non-native plants, water quality testing and planting native plants—it all makes a difference!

There are also many field trips, some of which are listed with our field trips, but please call 454-4544 or email saccreeks@gmail.com for further information. Their website is www.creekweek.net but hadn't been updated for 2011 as of press time. You can still get a good idea of the varied activities that will be available again this year.

TRICOLORED BLACKBIRD SURVEY

Another three years has gone by and it is time to count Tricolored Blackbirds again! Audubon California and the Tricolored Blackbird Working Group, with generous support from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, are conducting the triennial statewide survey to estimate the current population of this imperiled species. The survey will be held April 15th through April 17th, 2011. We are looking for volunteers to survey known, historical colony sites as well as scout for new, unknown colony sites that have escaped detection. No prior experience is necessary and any help, big or small, is welcome.

Let's make the 2011 Tricolored Blackbird survey the best yet! On the web at <http://tricolor.ice.ucdavis.edu/> you can access information on the Tricolored Blackbird, maps of survey areas, training session powerpoints, and directions on how to submit data at the end of the survey.

To prepare for the survey, we will host three training sessions for volunteers to learn the basics (and not so basics) of surveying for North America's most colonial landbird. Wondering how to ID a Tricolored vs. a Red-winged Blackbird? Or how to accurately estimate the size of a 60,000 bird megacolony? These are the types of questions that will be answered at the training sessions. For those seasoned veterans of Tricolored Blackbird surveys past, we encourage you to attend to get updated information on survey protocol and to meet your fellow volunteers and help train the new recruits.

Training sessions:

Sign up for the training session date that works best for you. Follow the link at <http://tricolor.ice.ucdavis.edu/> to the Doodle organizer and pick a date, or email Keiller Kyle your preference. Plan on attending only one training session since the information covered will be the same for each.

Training Session 1: Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, near Sacramento and Davis, CA

Dates: March 12th or March 26th

Training Session 2: Los Banos, CA, **Dates:** March 12th or April 9th

Training Session 3: San Jacinto Valley, Riverside County **Dates:** March 19th or April 9th

Please send any questions or concerns about the survey or training sessions to Keiller Kyle, the Tricolored Blackbird Conservation Coordinator, Audubon California, kkyle@audubon.org, 649-7600 ext 114 office, (973) 262-4528 cell

ACTING LOCALLY

I am constantly amazed and impressed by the work that I see Audubon chapters carrying out in their local communities. I spend most of my weekdays throughout the Central Valley and Sierra Nevada, and the Audubon chapters I visit are working on an incredible range of issues and projects. From outdoor education programs that connect children with nature, to riparian restoration projects, to native plant gardens, to people who devote a remarkable amount of time (and mileage) to conduct citizen science surveys. The list goes on and on. And all of this work is done entirely by volunteers. There seems to be no end to the energy and resources that these folks will put into improving circumstances for local birds. And it's a good thing—because without these efforts, our birds would undoubtedly be suffering.

The ongoing and uphill nature of working to protect our wildlife and natural resources can sometimes be overwhelming. Between increasingly gloomy climate change scenarios, the constant threat of drought, and our disappearing natural landscapes, it's easy to get discouraged. Political leaders often appear disconnected from what's really happening in local communities, and even those with the very best intentions often struggle to realize their conservation promises.

The importance of local involvement in the conservation movement really cannot be overstated. It just makes sense. Nobody understands the beauty, history, and significance of your landscape better than you. And no one will work harder to protect it. Conservation groups that have lasting impact realize that even projects and issues that appear small may have significant impact over time, and that every step we take today brings us closer to a brighter conservation future for our children.

If you are interested in getting involved, contact your chapter board and find out what's going on in your community. You can also visit ca.audubon.org to find out more about statewide conservation initiatives.

Jordan Wellwood, Audubon California

Birding and Nature Events

GODWIT DAYS

The 16th annual Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival is being held April 15-17 in Arcata, CA. Godwit Days is a three-day spring migration bird festival celebrating California's North Coast which offers towering redwoods, rocky ocean coasts, wild river valleys, expansive mudflats of Humboldt Bay, and the world-renowned Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary, where 271 species of birds have been sighted. Held at the peak of spring migration, shorebirds abound and special opportunities are planned to see many other species, including Marbled Murrelet, Spotted Owl, and Snowy Plover. The area offers a wide array of habitats and species for your observation and enjoyment. The selection of over 100 small group field trips, lectures, workshops, boating excursions, and community activities are led by experienced local guides. For further information and registration visit www.godwitdays.com or call 1-800-908-WING. Registration is now open.

HERON FESTIVAL AND WILDFLOWER BRUNCH

Held in Kelseyville, CA on April 30-May 1, the Heron Festival is a celebration of the Great Blue Herons return to their nesting sites around Clear Lake. Clear Lake is the largest natural lake entirely within California's borders. It is one of the oldest lakes in North America. Scientists say it is at least 2.5 million years old.

The festival, created by the local Redbud Audubon Society, includes activities such as pontoon boat rides to view the heron and cormorant rookeries and guided kayak trips to view birds on Kelsey Creek. The keynote speaker this year is Philip Greene, who has been photographing and studying herons and egrets for two decades. Informative and interesting nature presentations are held at Clear Lake State Park along with informative booths, and children's activities. A Wildflower Brunch is held annually on Saturday morning. Guided bird walks are available. More information, including event information, schedule and registration, can be found at www.heronfestival.org or call (800) 525-3743.

SECOND ANNUAL POINT REYES BIRDING FESTIVAL

Plan now to attend the second annual Point Reyes Birding Festival, April 29-May 2, 2011. Last year's event was highly successful and 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.

The Saturday night banquet will feature the Festival keynote address by noted local author, Alvaro Jaramillo. 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. The Festival includes an on-line auction with such exciting items as birding trips to Hawaii, Ecuador, and South Africa; bed and breakfast stays in West Marin; high quality binoculars, and many other birding and related items. There are two or three boat trips, whale watching from Point Reyes and a kayak field trip.

Those interested in attending the Festival should register soon, since many of the walks and presentations will fill up quickly. Go to www.pointreyesbirdingfestival.org/site to learn more about this exciting event. Tickets can be purchased online and they're going fast so register soon.

SPEAKERS AND PROGRAMS FOR 2011

April 21 - Ben Sacks, *Central Valley Red Fox* (Tentative Date)

May 19 - Doug Cheeseman, *Survival in East African Birds and Mammals*

Findings continued from page 3

Gray Warbler, and a Western Tanager, as well as several Varied Thrushes. Also of note was a single Pacific (formerly Winter) Wren and at least 20,000 Greater White-fronted Geese. An adult Bald Eagle was along Desmond Rd. for a day with a total of 81 species. At the beginning of the survey a doe and a buck jumped in Wood Duck Slough and swam across in front of me."

Pete Hayes

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!

Thanks to the following for their generous donations:

Julia Andrews, Martin Bailey, Carla Barbaro, Chris Conard, Michael Corlew, Daniel Foley, Thomas Graham, Alan Kilgore, Peter Stoddard, Carol Sughrue, Paul Thayer and Judith Tracy to the **General Fund**.

Julia Andrews, Martin Bailey, Carla Barbaro, Richard Begley, Dennis Bryerton, Chris Conard, Tim Fitzer, Alan Kilgore, Jeanne Swinehart and Judith Tracy to the **Conservation and Education Fund**.

RECENT SACRAMENTO AUDUBON BOARD ACTIONS

The SAS Board recently:

Donated a \$50 Wild Bird gift certificate, a copy of our "Birding the Sacramento Region", and our bird distribution/checklist for the **Department of Fish and Game's Nature Bowl** awards.

Donated \$500 to **Habitat 2020** to further conservation work in our area.

Donated \$500 to the **Friends of the Swainson's Hawk** towards litigation expenses in the suit to protect nesting habitat in the Florin-Vineyard Gap area. www.swainsonshawk.org

Donated \$500 to **Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society** towards litigation expenses in the suit to protect the Panoche Valley. www.scvas.org

Donated \$150 towards expenses for the **2011 California Burrowing Owl Consortium** hosted by the Bufferlands.

SAS NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to these
new members:

Susan Halle Brenda Terry
Joyce Longacre John and Bella
Alicia Patrice Wagner
Maria Sarich

Please Note New Email Address

Lea Landry, our membership chair has a new email address: llandry46@earthlink.net.

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 March 28, at 7pm at the SMUD Building, 6301 S Street, Sacramento.

JOIN THE SACRAMENTO AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

Sacramento Audubon Society Membership Application

Lea Landry, Membership Chair

11054 Autumnwind Lane, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670-4224

llandry46@earthlink.net (916) 638-1141

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

Donation for Conservation/Education \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Make checks payable to Sacramento Audubon Society

Name _____ Telephone _____

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

SACRAMENTO AUDUBON SOCIETY BOARD NOMINATIONS

Nomination Committee Chair, Tim Fitzer, is preparing a slate of officers for the 2011-12 fiscal year, beginning July 1, 2011. If you are interested in running for a board position you can contact him at spskua2@comcast.net, or at 870-5207. The proposed slate of officers will be published in the April Observer, and voted on at the April 21st general meeting.

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.

Observations continued from page 10

last reported on 1/2. After weeks without a report, the **Steller's Jay** in Curtis Park was found again on 1/30. The **Mountain Chickadees** at East Lawn Cemetery continued into at least mid-January, and **Evening Grosbeaks** were widely reported in Davis in addition to a couple of reports around Sacramento.

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

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:

Roger Adamson, Dan Airola, Dan Brown, Laura Davis, Jim Dunn, Todd Easterla, Andy Engilis, Brian Gilmore, Steve Hampton, Ed Harper, Dan Kopp, Gary Langham, Jeri Langham, Ron Melcer, Michael Perrone, Will Rockey, Deren Ross, Don Schmoltdt, John Sterling, Craig Swolgaard, Jim Tietz, John Trochet, Sally Walters, Bruce Webb, Dan Williams, and Ken Wilson.

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

Chris Conard

Seasonal Observations

January 1 to January 31

Rare and Unusual Bird Reports

www.cvbirds.org/ListServ.htm

After a very wet early winter, much of January was quite dry and pleasant, though periods of heavy fog held sway in the low portions of the Valley. There were many interesting reports for the month, some spilling over from December and the CBC season. Topping the list was the Central Valley's first **Zone-tailed Hawk**. It was first seen at fairly close range near Babel Slough Rd on 1/24 as it flew across the Sacramento River into south Sacramento, the site of a couple of additional reports into early February. The other bird causing a major stir this month was an adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** found at the Nimbus Hatchery on 1/9, continuing into February. It was a rather large-billed individual, but otherwise appeared to be a Lesser Black-backed, for just the third or fourth county record. Another first for the Central Valley came in on 2/1, but we'll wait until next month for that one.

Two immature **Trumpeter Swans** were found along Waltz Rd to the northwest of Lincoln on 1/19 and a **Eurasian Green-winged Teal** was found at the Yolo Wildlife Area on 1/29. A female **Red-breasted Merganser** was on Laguna West Lake, south of Laguna Blvd in Elk Grove on 1/3, continuing through at least 1/9. A **Red-throated Loon** on Dutch Slough near Oakley on 1/28 was not too far away, as a loon swims, from a bird reported in November at Sherman Island. On 1/20 a

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Pacific Loon was found from Beals Point at Folsom Lake along with seven **Common Loons**. An adult **Western Gull** was found on 1/28 along the American River Parkway (ARP) at Ancil Hofmann and a first-cycle **Glaucous Gull** was at the Davis WTP on 1/29.

Another of the month's top finds was a first winter **Harris's Sparrow** in a yard near the Gristmill Access of the ARP on 1/31. It continued into February, when it was widely seen and photographed. A **Sage Thrasher** was found on 1/4 south of Clarksburg along the South River Rd at Yolo County Rd 142. It continued through at least 1/19. On the 1/15 Tall Forest survey at Cosumnes River Preserve (CRP), highlights included six **Blue Snow Geese**, a male **Eurasian Wigeon**, and a **Western Sandpiper** (rare in winter). On 1/22, a **Cassin's Vireo** was an excellent find at the Tall Forest, along with a wintering **Townsend's Warbler**. A visit to private land in southeastern Sacramento County on 1/29 produced a rare (for California) "**Prairie**" **Merlin**, over 100 **Lewis's Woodpeckers**, and an immature **Northern Shrike**.

Additional highlights included an **Eastern Phoebe** found at the Orr portion of CRP on 1/4, and the continuing **Eastern Phoebe** along Garden Hwy north of Radio Rd, found through at least 1/9. The continuing **Tropical Kingbird** from Davis was

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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