



The *OBSERVER*

Sacramento Audubon Society

General Meeting

Thursday, November 18

Shepard Garden and Art Center
7pm General Meeting

Birds from Hokkaido, Japan Presentation by Ron LeValley

In February of 2009, the Pacific Seabird Group held their annual meeting in Hakodate, Hokkaido, Japan. Hokkaido is the northern island of Japan and is much less developed than the southern island. A number of exciting birds occur there in the winter, including the iconic Red-crowned Crane, the Steller's and White-tailed Sea Eagles, Whooper Swans and Blakiston's Fishing Owl. Before the conference, members from the Pacific Seabird Group accompanied some of the premier biologists studying these species on a week-long field trip. After the conference, another group traveled across to the northern portion of Honshu to see the Japanese Monkeys. Ron LeValley will share some of the ecological and environmental stories of these and other species illustrated with his fine photographs.

Ron has been photographing nature for over 40 years. He is a founding member of the Mendocino Coast Photographer Guild and Gallery in Fort Bragg. As a professional photographer, Ron has compiled an impressive collection (over 70,000 images) of wildlife photographs that he uses for presentations and publications.

Ron is also the founder and Senior Biologist of Mad River Biologists, a biological consulting firm in Eureka, California. Best known for the identification and distribution of birds along the Pacific Coast, he also has an extensive understanding of natural history subjects. He serves as Treasurer of the Pacific Seabird Group and is an Associate Editor of *Western*

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SACRAMENTO AUDUBON-SPONSORED CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT DATES FOR 2009-2010

Saturday, December 5, Daybreak, Great American River Bird Count

Co-Compilers: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777, Lea Landry, 638-1141, llandry@softcom.net
Join Jack and other volunteers to assist with this annual count of birds and other creatures along the American River Parkway sponsored by the American River Natural History Association (ARNHA). Results of this count are important to future planning for the Parkway, and the goal is to have 11 teams of two or more persons each. The count differs from other Christmas Counts in that teams count species rather than total numbers of each species. Contact Jack for details, team assignments, and meeting and compilation locations.

Saturday, December 19, Woodfords Christmas Count

Coordinator: Tim Fitzer, 870-5207, e-mail: spskua2@comcast.net
Compiler: Andi Salmi, 691-7216, e-mail: andisalmi@yahoo.com

Sunday, December 27, Sacramento Christmas Count

Compiler: Mark Cudney, 987-2422, e-mail: mcudney@aol.com

Sunday, January 3, Folsom Christmas Count

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

Other Christmas Bird Counts:

Monday, December 14, Benecia-Napa Christmas Count

Contact: Tim Fitzer (Grizzly Island), 870-5207, spskua2@comcast.net or
Compiler: Robin Leong, (707) 643-1287, robin_leong@netzero.net

Saturday, December 19, Auburn Christmas Count

Compiler: Deren Ross, (530) 308-5114, derenross@sbcglobal.net

Sunday, December 20, Putah Creek Christmas Count

Compiler: Steve Hampton, hamptons@sbcglobal.net

Sunday, December 20, Stockton Christmas Count

Compiler: Jim Roworth, (209) 956-2648, roworth@sbcglobal.net

Wednesday, December 30, Lincoln Christmas Count

Compiler: Ed Pandolfino, ERPfromCA@aol.com

Friday, January 1, Sonoma Valley Christmas Count

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

For locations and dates of additional Christmas Bird Counts, visit
<http://natureali.org/cbcs.htm> .

Field Trip Findings

Spenceville Wildlife Area (10/11)

– Leader Richard Barbieri reported: “With a group of 10 people, we set off for Spenceville Wildlife Area. Along the way and north of Lincoln we saw a female Common Yellowthroat, Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped, and Black-throated Gray warblers, Say’s Pheobe, Phainopepla, Savannah and Lark’s sparrows, and a pair of Bald Eagles at Camp Far West Lake. Within the wildlife area we saw all the common woodpeckers and many Lewis’s Woodpeckers, bluebirds, Western Tanager, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Marsh Wren and heard a Virginia Rail call from the grass a few feet away.”

Discovery Park (10/10) – Leader Dan Williams, subbing for Maureen Geiger, reported: “We had 53 species in four hours of effort. Highlights included excellent views of the recently returned Hermit Thrushes, Cedar Waxwings, White- and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Flickers, Yellow-rumps, and at least a dozen Western Bluebirds. A few Fox Sparrows called from the berry thickets but were uncooperative. There were still a few migrants to be found, including a late Vaux’s Swift, a nice adult male Western Tanager, a Barn Swallow, as well as a few Yellow and Orange-crowned, and one Black-throated Gray Warbler. Not much activity at the confluence this morning, but there was a trio of female Common Mergansers among the Canada Geese. No sign of the Ross’s Goose today. On my way home I spotted an immature Swainson’s Hawk over El Centro Road.”

Sunrise Area, American River Parkway (10/4) – Leader Mark Martucci reported “Eleven birders had 56 species of birds on a very cold early October morning. Highlights included at least 10 Phainopeplas, an Osprey, Cooper’s Hawk, Green Heron, Western Tanager and a Black-throated Gray Warbler.”

Bushy Lake (10/3) – Leader Dan Brown reported: “A good size group of participants enjoyed a very nice morning’s walk, tallying 54 species. The highlights were 8 species of raptors, 4 species of warblers, Say’s Phoebe, Western Wood-Pewee, Pacific slope Flycatcher (spotted by Mark Martucci) and a nice male Western Tanager.”

Point Reyes for Vagrants (9/26) – Leaders Mark Cudney and Tim Steurer

reported: Clear blue skies and no fog usually means one thing at Pt. Reyes –the birds have continued their migration south. The group did manage to see a few interesting species on a gorgeous day. A female Prairie Warbler was present at the fish docks–great looks. A lone female Blue Grosbeak challenged our birding identification skills at the lighthouse trees. A non-calling Pewee turned out just to be a Western when a tape of its call was played. Pectoral Sandpipers continued their abundance this fall with several at the Mendoza ranch.

Monterey Bay Pelagic and Land Birding Trip (9/26-27)

– Coordinator Ken Hashagen reported: “Another great 2-day trip to Monterey. Saturday, in cooperation with Monterey Seabirds, was a great pelagic trip in Monterey Bay and its environs. Humpback Whales, Risso’s Dolphins, Harbor Seals, California Sea Lions, and Pacific White-sided Dolphins all present and accounted for. Lots of birds: 6 shearwaters, including a glimpse of a Short-tailed Shearwater, Rhinoceros and Cassin’s Auklet, Horned Puffin, jaegers, Black-footed Albatross, Black and Ashy Storm Petrels, and pelicans and cormorants. Weather was clear, with little fog. Water a little lumpy but no one contracted that dread disease, sea sickness!

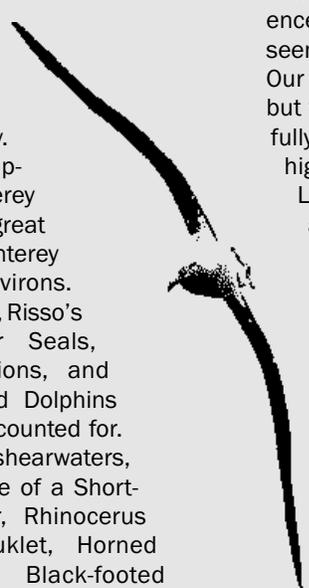
“Sunday was slower than on previous trips. Eighteen people drove to Andrew Molera State Park and took a 2-mile walk. Very few warblers, although we did see Yellow, Townsend’s, Orange-crowned, and Yellow-rumped. Also had Hutton’s and Warbling Vireo. Merlin, Peregrine, and American Kestrel were spotted. We then drove to the mouth of the Carmel River but the crowds of people on a Sunday pretty well put the birds down – couldn’t find the Snowy Plovers seen the day before on a scouting trip, and numbers of dowitchers and terns less than the day before. Finished the day at Jetty Road in Moss Landing. Saw Long and Short-billed Dowitchers,

Ruddy Turnstones, Long-billed Curlew, and Willets. Approximately 40 Sea Otters were rafted up within camera range. All in all a good trip, with around 110 species seen over the 2 days. Dan Brown led the shore portion of the trip and took lots of pictures. Check them out on his web site: www.naturestoc.smugmug.com. Click on “SAS sponsored field trip to Monterey, including a pelagic trip with Monterey Seabirds” under Featured Galleries.

Point Reyes for Vagrants (9/19) – Leader Chris Conard reported: “Point Reyes is one of my favorite places in the world, so it is hard to complain about any trip there. That being said, 24 of us experienced one of the slowest days I have ever seen during the “peak” of fall migration. Our first few stops were nearly birdless, but we were saved big time by a wonderfully cooperative Prairie Warbler. Other highlights included four Red-throated Loons in nearly full breeding plumage and a young Bald Eagle spotted by the sharp-eyed Dan Williams (he also spotted a Merlin that a few of us were able to see before it got away). The mood of the trip was enhanced by a trio from out of state (one from back east and two from outside the country – England and Norway) who were very happy to see some of our most common birds. A few of us enjoyed a beautiful evening walk to Abbott’s Lagoon, where the birds were again skimpy, but we had great side-by-side comparisons of juvenile Short-billed and Long-billed Dowitchers, and a beautiful red-sided garter snake.”

Evening Beaver Walk (9/17) – Leader Jack Hiehle reported 3-plus beaver, 3-plus turtles and a deer, along with White-tailed Kite, Great Horned Owl, California Quail, American Crow, Great Egret, Mourning Dove, Great Blue Heron, and Pied-billed Grebe.

Sailor Bar, American River Parkway (9/13) – Leader Mark Martucci reported: “Eighteen birders had 57 species of birds. Highlights included Osprey, Vaux’s Swift, Willow Flycatcher, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Western Tanager, and Rufous-crowned Sparrow.”



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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 Cathie LaZier, 457-6882, empid@earthlink.net for trips through November 10th. After November 10th and through December call the scheduler Maureen Geiger, 444-0804, mkgeiger@sbcglobal.net.

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

Saturday, October 31, 7am

Bodega Bay

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

Join Scott for a full day of birding around Bodega Bay, taking in a variety of habitats. Plan to see waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls and raptors. Bring lunch, water and warm clothes. Meet at the Park and Ride off I-80 in West Sacramento. From Sacramento take the West Capitol Ave. exit. Turn left, and the Park and Ride will be on your immediate left. This is a good trip for newer birders and experienced birders alike.

Sunday, November 1, 9am (Daylight saving time ends)

Bobelaine Sanctuary

Leader: Carla Barbaro, 717-8808

Bobelaine is a 430 acre National Audubon Sanctuary on the Feather River, managed by Sacramento Audubon. This riparian forest of cottonwoods, sycamores and willows is home to a wide variety of birds and wildlife. Join Carla to walk the trails and search the thickets for the resident and wintering birds. She hopes to find towhees, kinglets, goldfinches, sparrows, and at the River Overlook there's the possibility of Osprey and otters. A variety of herons, egrets, grebes, and again, sometimes otters, are seen at Lake Crandall as well. To reach the sanctuary 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 water for the trail, and snacks if you wish. This is a great trip for beginners, as well as more experienced birders.

Saturday, November 7, 8am

Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge

Leader: Andi Salmi, 691-7216
andisalmi@yahoo.com

Andi will be looking for the early flocks of ducks and geese that winter in the valley or are feeding 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. Meet at the Park and Ride off I-80 in West Sacramento. From Sacramento take the West Capitol Ave. exit. Turn left, and the Park and Ride will be on your immediate left. This is a good trip for newer birders and experienced birders alike. FRS radios are helpful on this trip.

Sunday November 8, 7:30am

Mather Lake

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

Mather Lake is one of Wayne's favorite birding locations. Join Wayne to look for a nice variety of resident and wintering birds. Possibilities include White-tailed Kites, Wild Turkey, Green Heron, Pied-billed Grebe and Common Yellowthroat. 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. This is a fee area. This is a wonderful trip for beginning birders.

Tuesday, November 10, 8am

Isenberg Crane Preserve/Cosumnes River Preserve Boardwalk

Leader: Dan Tankersley, 606-6518
dtankers@winfirst.com

Join Dan to look for wintering geese and ducks, including Gadwall, Northern Shovelers, teal and wigeon. In shallow water there may be shorebirds, such as dowitchers, sandpipers, yellowlegs, Dunlin, and maybe some surprises. Our wintering Sandhill Cranes will be back, and the usual herons and egrets will be around. The boardwalk is also a good place to look for the noisy but hard-to-see Marsh Wren, and the cryptic Wilson's Snipe. Meet Dan at the Nugget Market at 8am. Going south on I-5, take the Florin Road West exit; go west to the first signal light, (Greenhaven Drive), and make a U-turn. The parking area for the market will be on the right. This trip will end by noon. Bring FRS radios and spotting scopes if you have them. This is a great trip for both beginners and more experienced birders. Thick fog cancels this trip.

Friday, November 13, 8am-11am Fair Oaks Bridge

Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777

Jack knows this area well and knows where to find the interesting birds and plants on this morning nature walk. Meet at the north end of the old Fair Oaks Bridge. From the intersection of Fair Oaks and Sunrise, go east on Fair Oaks. When Fair Oaks turns left, continue straight ahead on Bridge Street. This is an excellent trip for beginners.

Saturday, November 14, 6:15am River Walk Bird Count

**Cosumnes River Preserve
Recorded Information, 684-2816**

Meet at the Visitor Center on Franklin Blvd, south of Twin Cities Road, for this

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monthly birding census trip. It is a great birding area, always full of surprises, and joining the group is a good way to find out what's happening and to hone your birding skills. This walk covers about four miles at a leisurely pace and takes approximately five hours, so bring lunch and liquids. Be sure to check the recorded information a day or two before for exact meeting time and possible updates.

Saturday, November 14, 7:30am
Serrano Parkway, El Dorado Hills
Leader: Maureen Geiger, 444-0804
mkgeiger@sbcglobal.net

Join Maureen for a leisurely walk through this riparian habitat and look for residents such as woodpeckers, nuthatches, towhees, wrens, bluebirds and marsh birds, as well as wintering sparrows, thrushes and other visitors. River otters are a possibility. Meet at 7:30am at the Bella Bru restaurant in the Raley's shopping center on El Dorado Hills Boulevard just off Highway 50; the group will leave for the trail at 7:45am sharp. Alternate meeting is on Silva Valley Parkway, immediately east of Serrano Parkway by 8am.

Sunday, November 15, 8am
Folsom Lake State Park
near Beek's Bight
Leader: Sandra Beseler, 782-3055
ssbeseler@yahoo.com

This morning walk near Folsom Lake will be appropriate for families and beginners alike. Join Sandra in finding wintering, migrating and resident birds such as Phainopepla, Western Bluebird, and Wild Turkeys in this oak woodlands area. Meet at Twin Rocks and Boulder Staging Area. From Hwy 50 east, take Folsom Blvd exit and head east. This turns into Auburn-Folsom Road. Go about 10 miles (past Douglas Blvd) and make a right onto Twin Rocks Road. Continue to the end of the road where it meets Boulder Road and park at the staging area. From Hwy 80 east, exit on Douglas Blvd and head east. Make a left at Auburn-Folsom Road, go about 2 miles and make a right on Twin Rocks Road. Bring liquids and be prepared to walk until late morning.

Sunday, November 15, 8-11am
Effie Yeaw Nature Center
Habitat Improvement
Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777

Join Jack and other nature lovers to assist with habitat restoration at this lovely nature area. Possible tasks include weed removal, pond clean-up, erecting fencing around oak trees for protection, and checking bird nest boxes. Call Jack for details.

Tuesday, November 17, 7:45am
Colusa National Wildlife Refuge
Leader: Dan Tankersley, 606-6518
dtankers@winfirst.com

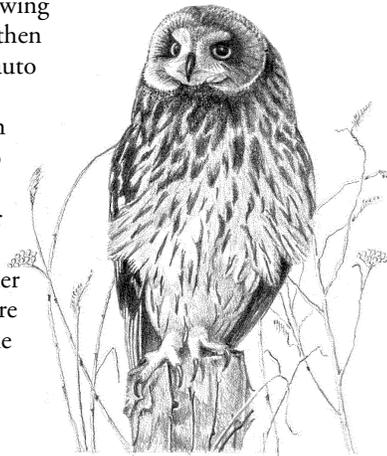
The Colusa NWR is another of the great Central Valley locations to view large waterfowl concentrations. There will be many duck species and plenty of Snow, Ross's and Greater White-fronted Geese. This refuge often provides an opportunity to view the elgasi race of the Greater White-fronted Goose. Eurasian 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.

Tuesday, November 17, 8-11am
Effie Yeaw Nature Center
Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777

Meet Jack in the Nature Center parking lot in Ancil Hoffman Park for a 3 hour walk on the trails which wind through the oak



Daniel Kirby

woodland and down to the American River. This is an excellent birding area, and Jack will also share his knowledge of the native and non-native plants and trees of this parkway area. A great trip for beginners and more experienced birders alike.

Thursday-Monday, November 19-23
Central Valley Birding Symposium
Contact: Frances Oliver
(209) 369-2010
hummer52@sbcglobal.net

See article on page 6 and don't miss this informative and exciting annual event.

Saturday, November 21, 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.

Saturday, November 21, 5:45am
Tall Forest Bird Count
Cosumnes River Preserve
Recorded Information: 684-2816

Meet at the Farm Center Gate at the intersection of Desmond and Bruceville Roads, ON TIME, to join this monthly bird count. Usually led by John Trochet, this area is normally closed to the public, so this is your opportunity to bird there. John has

an appreciation of nature on many levels, and a trip with him is always informative. You must check the recorded information a day or two ahead to get the exact meeting time and any other updated details. Arrive a little early, as this trip always leaves promptly.

Sunday, November 22, 7:30am
Solano Lake/Monticello Dam
Leader: Maureen Geiger, 444-0804
mkgeiger@sbcglobal.net

The varied habitats of Putah Creek, Solano Lake and the Monticello Dam Overlook can produce many different species of birds. On this trip, we will look for winter passerines, including Phainopepla, Western Bluebird and Say's Phoebe in the hills; Barrow's Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser and Osprey at Putah Creek pull-outs; possible Canyon and Rock Wrens, White-throated Swifts and Peregrine Falcon at the Dam Overlook; and American Dipper at the bridge. Lake Solano often produces large numbers of wintering ducks plus other shorebirds. We will stop at Solano Lake County Park (where there is a day-use fee) to look for Pileated and other woodpeckers. Bring lunch and water and if possible, scopes and FRS radios. This trip will last to mid-afternoon. Meet Maureen at the Park and Ride off I-80 in West Sacramento. Take the West Capitol Ave exit; turn left at the light and then left again into the Park and Ride lot. Car pooling is strongly advised, due to limited access at stops and the distance traveled. An alternative meeting site is Steady Eddie's on the east side of the downtown Winters parking lot at 5 E. Main Street. We will leave Winters by 8:30. Contact Maureen for more information.

Saturday, November 28, 8am
American River between Howe and Watt
Leader: Dan Kopp, 213-2791
rey-ality@hotmail.com

Join Dan at his favorite spot along the Parkway in search of our wintering birds, and get to know an area he knows well. Although Dan birds this spot almost daily, he has rarely seen other birders and is eager to share his knowledge of this oasis behind his home. Last year this area produced a Palm Warbler and a California Thrasher; the former is not likely to be seen at this time of year, but he will work the area well to locate any goodies in hopes of finding them for the group, such as a White-throated Sparrow which he has found the last three years. There are well worn trails

and some that require a little more work, so depending on everyone's ability, he will decide how strenuous the walk will be in the morning. The trip will last until lunch time. From Hwy 50, take the Howe Avenue exit and head north; from Howe, take the first exit before the bridge. To do this, you will need to be in the right-most lane. Cross La Riviera Drive and enter the Howe Avenue Access to the American River. There is a fee to park in the lot, or parking is available on La Riviera Drive.

Sunday, November 29, 8am
Road 113, Robinson Road and
Birds Landing Area
Leader: Tim Fitzer
870-5207
spskua2@comcast.net

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

Tuesday, December 1, 8-11am
Nimbus Fish Hatchery
Leader: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777

This is a good opportunity to explore the Nimbus/American River area. Walk with Jack and look for diving ducks, kingfishers, wintering gulls and other wildlife along the River. He will also be sharing his knowledge of interesting archeological points relating to early Chinese gold mining. Meet in the parking lot of the Nimbus Fish Hatchery off Hazel Avenue.

Saturday, December 5
Great American River Bird Count
Co-compilers: Jack Hiehle, 967-0777
Lea Landry, 638-1141,
llandry@softcom.net

See write up on page 1.

Sunday, December 6, 9am-Noon
Nimbus Fish Hatchery/American River
Leader: Ed Harper, 971-3311
calidris@surewest.net

Join Ed for an informative walk along the American River. Ed is a great birder who will be looking for any interesting or unusual birds, with emphasis on tricky

identification of the many gulls that winter on the River near Nimbus Dam. This trip will last until late morning. A scope is useful in addition to binoculars. Meet at the Nimbus Fish Hatchery parking lot near Hwy 50 and Hazel Avenue (about 15 miles east of Sacramento).

Saturday, December 12, 8am-Noon
Wetlands and Waterfowl Tour II
Leader: Roger Jones, 875-9174
jonesro@sacsewer.com

Tour one of the seasonal or permanent wetland areas within the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District Bufferlands in Elk Grove. The Wetlands and Waterfowl Tour offers a chance to see many bird and mammal species including waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, beavers and coyotes.

Tour participants will enjoy a short walk guided by a Bufferlands staff wildlife biologist who will explain current wildlife management and habitat restoration techniques.

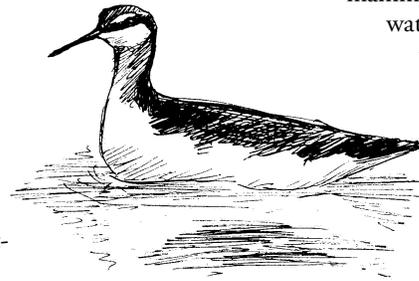
Space is limited. The meeting location is weather-dependent, so please contact Roger Jones during the week preceding the event for exact meeting location and directions.

Saturday, December 12, 7am
River Walk Bird Count
Cosumnes River Preserve
Recorded Information, 684-2816

Meet at the Visitor Center on Franklin Blvd, south of Twin Cities Road, for this monthly birding census trip. It is a great birding area, always full of surprises, and joining the group is a good way to find out what's happening and to hone your birding skills. This walk covers about four miles at a leisurely pace and takes approximately five hours, so bring lunch and liquids. Be sure to check the recorded information a day or two before for exact meeting time and possible updates.

Sunday, December 13, 8am
Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge
Leader: Andi Salmi, 691-7216
andisalmi@yahoo.com

Andi will be looking for the great flocks of ducks and geese that winter in the valley or stop to feed on their way further



Kirsten Munson

Field Trips continued on page 6

CENTRAL VALLEY BIRDING SYMPOSIUM 2009

It's party time again! The 13th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium will be held November 19-22 in Stockton, CA, at the Hilton Stockton.

Attend workshops with raptor expert Bill Clark, birding pros Jon Dunn and Joe Morlan, as well as other informative folks. The evening programs include Murrelet Halterman on Yellow-billed Cuckoos and Stephen Shunk on "The Magic of Birding". The ever popular "stump the experts" panel is back again too.

There are drawing and digiscoping workshops and programs for beginning birders. Field trips visit surrounding hot spots to celebrate the diversity of birds wintering in the Central Valley. The Birder's Market is full of artists and vendors with a wonderful selection of bird and nature related items. For more info, check the website at www.cvbs.org, or contact Frances Oliver at hummer52@sbcglobal.net or 209-369-2010. Register soon, field trips are filling up.



SAN JOAQUIN RIVER RESTORATION

A conservation victory has begun to unfold in California's Great Central Valley; this year, the San Joaquin River will receive more water than it has since the 1940s when Friant Dam was constructed. In 2012, Chinook salmon will be re-introduced and with any luck will begin their recovery from the brink of extinction.

If you grew up in the San Joaquin Valley before the 1940s, you probably remember an impressive river flowing to the Delta from the mountains beyond Fresno. A river that was as volatile as it was vital. A river that in wet years overflowed its banks and wreaked havoc and at the same time abundance, and in dry years created scarcity and conflict.

If you lived near the river, you may remember the sound of thousands of salmon splashing upstream on their journey to spawn. You may even have spear-fished Chinook salmon in the San Joaquin.

Some things have changed in the Valley since then and others have not. The San Joaquin no longer flows from the Sierra to the Delta, and Chinook salmon no longer travel up this river to spawn. We have controlled the movement of water in astounding ways, but have not learned how to create water where there is none.

In a third year of drought and with increasing restrictions on water use, many Californians will find it difficult to see water flowing down the San Joaquin for the first time in over 70 years. For others this process is recognition of the inherent value of a natural river system and the culmination of decades of hard work.

For the Birds...

The vast majority of wetland and riparian habitat that once existed in the San Joaquin Valley has been lost for decades. Birds have been forced onto smaller and increasingly marginal pieces of land, and only those that have adapted to the agriculture-dominated landscape have continued to thrive.

Over 225 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians depend on riparian habitats, and riparian ecosystems harbor the most diverse bird communities in the arid and semiarid regions of the western United States. Riparian areas can harbor individuals during the bird breeding season at densities up to ten times greater than surrounding terrestrial habitats and the San Joaquin River habitat complex hosts a variety of special-status species including Bald Eagle, Greater Sandhill Crane, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Swainson's Hawk, Willow Flycatcher, and Bank Swallow.

As test releases begin in 2009 and federal and state agencies prepare the river for the reintroduction of Chinook in 2012, Audubon California is working to maximize the benefits of the revived river corridor for birds. For more information and to sign on in support of the river restoration, see our website: www.ca.audubon.org.

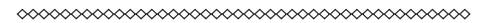
Jordan Wellwood
Central Valley/Sierra Nevada Conservation Coordinator
Audubon California

Field Trips continued from page 5

south. There is a 3.7 mile driving route and a great viewing platform as well. This trip will last into early afternoon, so bring lunch, drinks and warm clothes. This is a good trip for newer birders and experienced birders alike. FRS radios are helpful on this trip. Meet at the Park and Ride off I-80 in West Sacramento. From Sacramento, take the West Capitol Ave exit. Turn left, and the Park and Ride will be on your immediate left. 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, December 13, 6:40am Tall Forest Bird Count Cosumnes River Preserve Recorded Information: 684-2816

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



Findings continued from page 2

Reichmuth Park (9/12) — Leader Tim Manolis reported: "Weather was a bit odd, cloudy and muggy, even a few sprinkles. About 16 folks attended, so a good size group. A perched, dark-phase Swainson's Hawk and a few flyover Vaux's Swifts were about the most unusual things seen. There was a sprinkling of flycatchers (Western Wood-Pewee, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Pacific-slope Flycatcher) good numbers of Western Tanager, Wilson's Warblers and Yellow Warblers, one Black-throated Gray Warbler. An early Oregon Junco was seen. Wood Ducks, American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, and Starlings were in good numbers."

Evening Beaver Walk (9/3) — Leader Jack Hiehle said his group saw 2-plus beaver, 2 deer, 6 Fence Lizards, and 1 turtle. Birds included Cooper's Hawk, White-tailed Kite, Belted Kingfisher, Black Phoebe, Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose, Great Egret, California Quail, and Mute Swan.

Pete Hayes

General Meeting continued
from page 1

Birds, the journal of the Western Field Ornithologists. One of Ron's outstanding attributes is sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm with others.

Ron began his career in Sacramento where he grew up and graduated from American River College and Sacramento State College before going on to Humboldt State University for his Master's Degree.

He spent almost 20 years conducting an ecotourism business that took him on over 100 excursions to Baja California, to the Galapagos nineteen times, and to other places such as the Amazon, the far north of the eastern Canadian Arctic, Southeast Alaska, Australia and Africa.

As part of his website Ron includes 'Outside My Window'. "It's a recent photo that I have taken.

It usually has some natural history theme (but sometimes not). Much of the reason that I send out these pictures is to increase awareness of the natural world, awareness of the wonderful things that are 'outside' our windows, beyond the insulation that much of our daily life imposes on us. If you would like to be added to the email list go to <http://www.levalleyphoto.com/gallery/omw.php>. I also appreciate comments or questions about the photos, and any way you think this effort can be improved! Enjoy the day and. . . Take the time to look outside your windows!"

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



Red-crowned Crane
Ron LeValley



Red-crowned Crane
Ron LeValley

JACK WILBURN'S SPECIAL BIRDS

Longtime Sacramento Auduboner Jack Wilburn gives new meaning to the term birding. He has taught scores of Sacramento State and UCD Extension birding classes. He penned a weekly wild birds column in the Sacramento Bee for many years. He has won prizes for his bird photography. And nowadays he is racking up awards such as "1st Overall Ace Pigeon" owner in competitive pigeon racing.

Ten years ago, having retired as an Aerojet rocket scientist, Jack returned in a big way to the hobby he began as a 9-year-old in Los Angeles and followed off and on through the years. He and his wife, Phyllis, a Sac Audubon field trip leader, had acquired a 30-acre property in the El Dorado County foothills near Rescue. "We avoided the problem of keeping pigeons in a residential neighborhood where they might land on a neighbor's roof," Jack says.

He built a loft in which to house racing birds, among some 200 breeds descended from Rock Doves. He joined the Hangtown Flyers Racing Pigeon Club and began entering racing competition. Last year he scored his top money win at the "Gold Country Challenge One Loft event" featuring four races in which two of his birds finished 1st and 5th in point totals as Overall Ace Pigeons, returning him \$6,500

Race day features intense activity by the competitors. Birds are loaded on a truck and trailer and driven anywhere from 100 to 600 miles away in Nevada or Idaho.. There they are released to fly home at perhaps 50 mph to their owners' lofts and timed with an electronic clocking system activated by the the serial number on the bird's plastic leg band. .

"We don't know how they find their way home," Jack says. "Sight is important and they may use the sun as a compass. "Ultra sound plays a part, just like whales can hear the sound of another whale for hundreds of miles. They can fly at night, just as the Army forced pigeons to carry messages in World War II well after dark."

Not all of them return home. Hazards include Cooper's Hawks and Peregrine Falcons, unexpected storms, and hunters during dove season. Once Jack discovered a hen that had come down near his loft with both legs broken, missing feathers and bruised breast after having apparently colliding with a power line. Jack applied splints to the legs and placed her in an an isolation cage and eventually moving her back into the breeding loft. Some pigeon enthusiasts name their birds but Jack prefers to identify racing pigeons by their leg band numbers. "If I gave a bird a name and lost it I'd probably feel worse," he says.

But when he eventually retires a racing pigeon to the breeding loft he gives it a name. One of those birds was "Sierra Sam," which had captured "Champion Bird" honors in 2001. Jack flew him again the next year, then retired him to let him sire some of his best pigeons. He currently has 210 pigeons. Jack's passion for pigeon racing is something to behold. "I never get over the thrill of seeing a distant bird that's a speck in the sky and wondering if it's mine. and watching it fly in to the loft," he says. "If my health got so bad that I couldn't race pigeons again, I don't think I would want to go on living."

He says racing pigeons can be an ideal family hobby, with mom, dad and the kids all getting to handle the birds. He says he would be happy to give anyone tips on getting started with the hobby. His number is (530) 642-9942.

*Pete Hayes
From a recent interview with Jack*

COUNTY PARKS NEED YOU!

The Parks Annual Pass is your ticket to our scenic regional parks. For as little as \$50 per year, you and your household can enjoy the Open Space and recreation, relaxation, and outdoor events at parks facilities located throughout Sacramento County. All money goes directly to County Parks and supports our beautiful 15,000 acre Regional Park system.

Pass holders receive free daily entry into Regional Parks and Annual Passes are valid for one year from date of purchase. Go on-line: www.sacparks.net and click on Annual Pass on the right hand side of the web page. They make great gifts and benefit everyone!

Birding Festivals

LODI'S SANDHILL CRANE FESTIVAL

Don't forget, coming right up is Lodi's Sandhill Crane Festival which celebrates the return of Sandhill cranes to the valley. In collaboration with the City of Lodi, the Festival continues this November 6-8, welcoming an ever-growing circle of friends to share the wonder of the Sandhill crane.

For more information, the phone contact is 800-581-6150 or email info@cranefestival.com. Online information can be found at www.cranefestival.com including the program and tour schedules.

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. For more information see their website at www.ci.galt.ca.us, 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. Guest speakers include Bill Clark, a photographer, author, and lecturer with over 45 years experience working with birds of prey, including 5 years as Director of the National Wildlife Federation's Raptor Information Center. Rick Sammon, a Canon camera photographer will present a special slide show "Exploring Wildlife and Nature Photography." The keynote speaker will be Scott Weidensaul, His topic: "Living on the Wind: The World of Migratory Birds." At any moment of every day, migratory birds fill the skies of the western hemisphere and Scott will discuss the how and the why. Of course there are the usual festival activities with highlights particular to the special Klamath Falls area.

Check out the website at www.WinterWingsFest.org for the latest in Festival planning information. On-line registration will not begin until early or mid December unless otherwise notified. Brochures are scheduled to be distributed in early December and will also be available on-line.

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL SAN DIEGO BIRDING FESTIVAL

San Diego is birdier than ever, the county having just recorded its 500th bird species, a Snow Bunting. In addition, the San Diego Bird Festival—now in its 14th year—set a new record during the 2009 festival for the number of species counted. Several field trips observed more than 100 species per trip.

The 2010 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. Birders will be bused to the park for admission before opening hours. In addition to birding the "volunteer" inhabitants of the 1,800-acre park, participants will go behind the scenes to learn about conservation and avian propagation of species such as the endangered California Condor.

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.

HELP PROJECT FEEDERWATCH TRACK BACKYARD BIRDS

Bird watchers needed to help scientists discover changes in bird populations.

Ithaca, NY—What happens in the backyard should not stay in the backyard—at least when it comes to bird feeders. By sharing information about which birds visit their feeders between November and April, backyard bird watchers can help scientists track changes in bird numbers and movements from year to year, through Project FeederWatch (<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw>), a citizen science program from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/>) and Bird Studies Canada (<http://www.bsc-eoc.org>). Project FeederWatch begins on November 14 and runs through early April. Taking part is easy. Anyone can count the numbers and kinds of birds at their feeders and enter their information on the FeederWatch website.

"To get the most complete picture of bird movements, we always need new sets of eyes to tell us what species are showing up at backyard feeders," says David Bonter, leader of Project FeederWatch. "Participants always tell us how much fun it is and how good it feels to contribute to our understanding of birds by submitting their sightings."

Project FeederWatch is for people of all ages and skill levels. To learn more and to sign up, visit www.feederwatch.org or call the Cornell Lab toll-free at (866) 982-2473. In return for the \$15 fee (\$12 for Cornell Lab members) participants receive the FeederWatcher's Handbook, an identification poster of the most common feeder birds, a calendar, complete instructions, and Winter Bird Highlights, an annual summary of FeederWatch findings.

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 November 24, at 7pm at the SMUD Building, 6301 S Street, Sacramento.

SAS NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to these new members:

Sallie Bettencourt
Terrie Gray
Beverly Moon
Colene Rauh
Peter Thomas
Patricia A Wagner

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!

Thanks to the following for their generous donations:

Karen Benson, Alice Carney, Betty Gutt, Ken Hashagen, Monte Ikemire, Marlene Ishihara, Nancy Joyce, Ken Mateik and Patricia Wagner to the **Conservation and Education Fund**.

Betty Gutt, Ken Mateik and Jon Wato to the **General Fund**.

Rylee Dill had her ninth birthday recently, and had a "Bird Sanctuary" birthday party, with treasure hunts, bird calls, painting bird houses, and watching "Hoot". Instead of presents, she asked her friends to give donations to Sac Audubon, and collected \$152, which she donated to the **Purple Martin Project**. Happy Birthday, Rylee!

BINOCULARS LOST BUT FOUND.

One pair of binoculars was left at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center after the October General Meeting. Please contact Lea Landry at llandry@softcom.net or (916) 638-1141 to identify and claim them. Perhaps the owner missed too many identifications on Ed Pandolfino's sparrow quiz, so left the bins, thinking they weren't "seeing" the birds correctly.



Stephen D'Amato

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.

JOIN THE SACRAMENTO AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

Sacramento Audubon Society Membership Application

Lea Landry, Membership Chair
11054 Autumnwind Lane, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670-4224
llandry@softcom.net (916) 638-1141

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

Donation for Conservation/Education \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Make checks payable to Sacramento Audubon Society

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP + 4 _____

Email _____

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

Observations continued from page 10

Thrasher near William Pond along the ARP on 9/20 was a nice find for the Parkway.

Beginning with January 2009, we are now featuring photos of some of the highlight birds on the Sacramento Audubon Web site: www.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 over 100 reports, it is impossible to list everyone; however, I want to thank the following for reports on the above species and for providing additional information:

Dan Brown, Todd Easterla, Richard Hall, Steve Hampton, Marcel Holyoak, Oscar Johnson, Dan Kopp, Jeri Langham, Jeff Mangum, Michael Perrone, Mary Schiedt, Zach Smith, John Sterling, Kevin Thomas, John Trochet, Katharine Wagner, and Dan Williams.

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

Chris Conard.

Seasonal Observations

September 1 to September 30
Rare and Unusual Bird Reports
www.cvbirds.org/ListServ.htm

When most birders think of fall migration, they think of September. While August has a lot to offer, it doesn't feel like fall. October is a great month for birding, but the songbird migrants are slowing a bit, and many of the winter birds are already in place. So September it is. And this was a good one. Topping the list are several excellent songbird migrants from Cosumnes River Preserve (CRP). A **Brewer's Sparrow** was a nice find on 9/4 and a **Green-tailed Towhee** was found on 9/9, but a **Northern Waterthrush** on 9/14 was even more exciting, and a male **Black-throated Blue Warbler** in the Orr Forest portion of CRP on 9/15 was exceptional. Rounding out the Sacramento County warblers was a juvenile/female **Hooded Warbler** at Glen Hall Park along the American River Parkway (ARP) on 9/19-20.

Yolo County Grasslands Park south of Davis produced a nice list of songbirds as well, with a **Least Flycatcher** on 9/14, and an **Olive-sided Flycatcher**, a **Gray Flycatcher** (extremely rare in fall), and a **Dusky Flycatcher** on 9/12, along with a **Chipping Sparrow**. A thick-billed **Fox Sparrow** on 9/23 is from a racial group very rarely recorded in the Valley. A first fall **Tennessee Warbler** was found in north Davis on 9/28-29 and a **Blackpoll Warbler** was found at the UC Davis Riparian Reserve on 9/26.

Shorebirds continued in good numbers at Yolo Wildlife Area (YWA), with reports of

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the possible **Red-necked Stint** (see last month's column) continuing through 9/10. A very rare adult **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** was photographed on 9/4. Nearly all of these rare Asian shorebirds found in the state are juveniles. It was last reported on

9/9. Up to a dozen **Pectoral Sandpipers** were also present, as were **Snowy Plovers** on 9/5 and 9/24. A **Red Phalarope** reported from YWA on 9/9 is a very rare bird inland. A **Pacific Golden-Plover** was found at the Woodland WTP on 9/4 and a juvenile **Sanderling** was at the Davis Wetlands on 9/11.

A **Greater Flamingo** was found at the Davis WTP on 9/29; the bird was likely an escapee, but still unexpected and interesting. A **Lesser Nighthawk** was rare locally, and getting late in the season, at Slide Hill Park in Davis on 9/6, and more expected was a **Common Poorwill** on Michigan Bar Road in eastern Sacramento County on 9/27. On 9/12 at CRP, an early **Short-eared Owl** was a nice surprise, along with a **Marbled Godwit** and a **Bank Swallow**. The godwit and swallow are both fairly regular in Yolo County in migration, but quite rare in Sacramento County—the latter becoming increasingly so. A **California**

Observations continued on page 9

Sacramento Audubon Society Information

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

Internet Address: www.sacramentoaudubon.org

Membership/Subscriptions: Lea Landry, 11054 Autumnwind Lane
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

(916) 638-1141, e-mail preferred: llandry@softcom.net

Seasonal Observations: Chris Conard, 2405 Rio Bravo Circle,
Sacramento, CA 95826
(916) 362-5942,

e-mail preferred: conardc@gmail.com

Editor: Sharon Wisecarver, e-mail, sawise7@sbcglobal.net

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