



The Observer

Sacramento Audubon Society

April General Meeting

Thursday, April 18, 2024 at 7 p.m.

The speaker will be on-site at Effie Yeaw Nature Center. Participants may opt to join the meeting via Zoom.

If you would like to attend the meeting via Zoom, you will need to register online at <https://www.sacramentoaudubon.org/monthly-speaker>.

Falkland Islands

Presented by **Michele McCormick**

In November of 2023 Michele spent two weeks in the Falkland Islands. She was attracted by the opportunity to see and photograph several species of Penguin, Black-browed Albatross, and numerous other birds found there. In her photography-based talk she'll share the images she made, and the story of what it was like to visit this remote country.

Sacramento resident Michele McCormick is a widely exhibited photographer. Upon retiring after successful career in Public Relations, she turned her energies back to her first love: photography.

She entered the fine arts arena in 2012. Her images have been frequently published, exhibited and honored. In addition to participation in juried shows, she has held solo exhibits at Viewpoint Photographic Gallery, Niello Acura, and various commercial venues.

In the COVID era, her work took on a new focus. Deprived of her usual photographic themes and subjects, she expanded her long-standing interest in bird photography and, recognizing that Sacramento has a rich avian population throughout the year, she began to focus on bird photography – and became immersed in a new passion.

In addition to offering her work for competition and gallery exhibition, Michele issues a Daily Avian Image e-mail and accompanying short writeup about the image, which enjoys an enthusiastic following. To be added to her list simply send your request to her at: michele@mgroup1.com.



Photo provided by Michele McCormick

Get Involved - We Have Fun Volunteer Openings

Currently we are looking for volunteers to fill three critical positions. Recently Harriet Saeck stepped down as our illustrious Treasurer after many years of service. Eric Johnson who is our current Vice President stepped up to fill those big shoes. So we are now looking to fill the Vice President Position on the Board. The Vice President's primary role is in support of the President. The Board meets monthly via Zoom, except for June, July and December.

We are also looking to fill the Recording Secretary position on the Board. Responsibilities include attending Board meetings, distributing the agenda and reports, along with taking meeting minutes.

Finally we need to relieve Daphne Reimer who has graciously served as our Hospitality Chair for in-person General Meetings at Effie Yeaw Nature Center for years. Duties include either making yummy cookies or bringing store bought goodies, making coffee and setting up the goodies table. General Meetings occur on the third Thursday of the month except for June, July, August and December. Hospitality Chair would arrive at 6:30 p.m. and leave after meeting ends around 8:30 p.m.



Photo: Effie Yeaw Nature Center

Sacramento Audubon Spring and Summer Events

To volunteer for any of these events, please contact Bill Bianco biancowm@yahoo.com

ECOS Earth Day, Southside Park Sunday, April 21, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Sacramento Earth Day is the largest Earth Day celebration in the Sacramento region. Join us at Southside Park in Sacramento (700 T St), for a free, family-friendly event.

<https://www.ecosacramento.net/sacearthday/>

California Duck Days, Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Headquarters

Saturday, April 27, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

California Duck Days is a family oriented, community-based outdoor festival with activities for people of all ages. On-site activities for families include interactive exhibits, wetland themed arts and crafts, and much more.



\$20 Entry Fee per vehicle. Activities and exhibits— other than food trucks inside the festival—are free!

<https://yolobasin.org/california-duck-days/>

Walk on the Wild Side, Beach Lake Park

Saturday, May 18, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

See event description at right.

<https://www.sacsewer.com/event/walk-on-the-wildside/>

Harvest Day, Fair Oaks Horticulture Center

Saturday, August 3, 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Fair Oaks Horticulture Center
11549 Fair Oaks Boulevard, Fair Oaks, CA
95628

Join the UCCE Master Gardeners of Sacramento County at Sacramento's ultimate gardening event. See the Fair Oaks Horticulture Center in all its summer glory.

Purchase your Gardening Guide & Calendar and visit the neighboring Fair Oaks Community Garden. Best of all, there are UCCE Master Gardeners on site to answer gardening questions.

<https://sacmg.ucanr.edu/?calitem=572624>



Photos: SacSewer

Bufferlands: Walk On The Wildside

May 18, 2024 | 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

This free event celebrates International Migratory Bird Day and highlights local efforts in wildlife conservation and protecting and restoring native Central Valley habitat. Visitors can hike the miles of trails, or enjoy tours of restored wetlands and oak forests on SacSewer's Bufferlands. Throughout the day, visitors can get up close and personal with wild animals, listen to some great folk music, and check out conservation exhibits.

Event and Parking are FREE!

<https://www.sacsewer.com/event/walk-on-the-wildside/>



Reminder: Big Day of Giving - May 2nd

Mark your calendars!

Big Day of Giving (BDOG) is on Thursday, May 2 this year.

Big Day of Giving (BDOG) is an annual online event in which local non-profits can obtain extra funds to support their missions! You can help Sacramento Audubon Society with its mission by donating online at: www.bigdayofgiving.org/sacramentoaudubonsociety There is a \$15 minimum donation. Starting on April 18, if you'd like to schedule your BDOG donation prior to the event, you can. For early donations, please use the web address above. Every gift, no matter the size, makes a difference!

Golden 1 Credit Union match is back! Once again, when you use your Golden 1 credit card or debit card, Golden 1 will match your donation! Longtime BDOG sponsor Golden 1 Credit Union is offering a \$100,000 proportional match during Big Day of Giving! Gifts made both during the early giving period (April 18–May 1) and on Big Day of Giving (May 2nd) will count toward the proportional match.

Sacramento Audubon Society • Slate of Officers and Directors for 2024-2025

Voting on the slate will open on May 27, 2024 and closes on June 17, 2024. You can cast your vote in one of two ways: either using the online voting link (<https://www.sacramentoaudubon.org/board-election>) or by sending in a mail-in ballot. The link to vote online will also be emailed to members. As per the SAS bylaws, one must be a dues-paying SAS member in order to vote.

If you are interested in joining the Sacramento Audubon Society's Board of Directors contact Paul Miller at: sacaudubonpresident@gmail.com

President	Paul Miller
Vice President	Open
Treasurer	Eric Johnson
Recording Secretary	Open
Corresponding Secretary	Nancy Gronert
Directors	Anthony Asay, Taylor Florence, Susan Goodrich, Cliff Feldheim, and Nicole Barden

Field Trips April 1 — May 15, 2024

Sacramento Audubon Society is proud to offer field trips to suit a variety of birders and birding abilities, and visit a large range of birding locations. Activities are organized and led by volunteers who offer their time and expertise to those who join them.

- Unless otherwise noted, field trips are geared towards those over the age of 13.
- Please ensure the safety and well being of all by not attending a field trip if you are sick.
- Please read the description of each field trip carefully to note any specific requirements.
- Some trips require advance registration. Registration opens when the trip is announced in *The Observer* or posted to the website. (Please note that receiving the electronic *Observer* means you will receive it up to 2 weeks in advance of the paper edition.) On the [website](#), click on the photo or title of the field trip to learn more about the trip and its registration requirements.
- Always check the [website](#) for any last minute updates prior to joining a field trip. Cancellations or last minute instructions will be posted to the website, even for trips requiring registration. Trips are planned up to 3 months in advance and conditions can change. If you are unsure of the status of a field trip, call or email the trip leader.

Trips leave the meeting place at the time stated. Please arrive early if you need driving directions or plan to carpool.

Leaders cannot organize ride sharing or carpools as they 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.

PLEASE NOTE: The entrance fee for all Sacramento County Parks increased as of January 2024. The new daily fee is \$7, and the annual fee is \$70. This includes many popular birding locations such as the American River Parkway, Gibson Ranch, and Mather Regional Park. For more information: <https://regionalparks.saccounty.gov/Parks/Pages/EntranceFees.aspx>

Ancil Hoffman Park

Saturday, April 6, 8 a.m.

Expected length: 3-4 hours
Leader: Dan Williams, (714) 943-1266
jaegermaestro@yahoo.com

Join Dan for a short morning walk through this historic jewel on the Parkway. We will be looking for early spring migrants as well as resident nuthatches, wrens, towhees, and other small passerines. We'll start out birding the riparian habitat along the river down to the swale below the end of the golf course and finish the loop by walking the path back along the driving range. Trip will end before noon. This is a great trip for beginners and more experienced birders. A Sac County Park Pass or \$7 entry fee is required for all vehicles.

Meet Dan at the main picnic area parking lot across from the golf course clubhouse. From the intersection of Fair Oaks and Marconi, proceed east on Palm Drive. Turn right on California Ave and left on Tarshes Dr into the park. After showing your park pass or paying to park at the kiosk, proceed to the end of Tarshes Dr and park in the farthest lot on the left across from the golf course clubhouse.

North Natomas Regional Park

Sunday, April 7, 8 a.m.

Expected length: 3-4 hours
Leader: Ben Graber (916) 844-8682
Bgraber984@protonmail.com

Join Ben for a leisurely morning walk around the North Natomas Regional Park. We can expect to see a wide variety of grassland species including meadowlarks, Ring-necked Pheasants, Red-Winged Blackbirds. Herons, egrets, and various species of raptors are also possible. This trip will include approx. 2 to 3 miles of walking over flat terrain; bringing liquids is recommended. This is a great trip for beginning and more experienced birders.

Meet Ben at the parking lot on the north side of New Market Drive, across from Inderkum High School. (2501 New Market Dr, Sacramento 95835) From Sacramento, take I-5 North to Del Paso Rd, Exit 525A. Go right/east on Del Paso Rd. In 0.5 miles turn left onto Town Center Dr.

Sailor Bar

Thursday, April 11, 7:30 a.m.

Expected length: 3-4 hours
Leader: Darrell Mohr, (916) 225-3999
mohrdd@gmail.com

Join Darrell for a morning walk checking out the local birds. Possible birds include Phainopepla and California Quail. This is a good trip for both beginners and experienced birders.

From Sacramento, take Highway 50 east to Exit 21, Hazel Ave. Turn left at the light and proceed north 1.4 miles to Winding Way. Turn left on Winding Way, then proceed .5 miles to Illinois Ave, where you will take a left. Sailor Bar is at the south end of Illinois Ave. Meet at the last parking lot on your left, just before the boat launch parking area. A Sacramento County Park Pass or \$7 entry fee is required for all vehicles.

Lake Solano

Saturday, April 13, 9 a.m.

Expected length: 3 hours
Leader: Paul Miller, (916) 768-7503
pjmiller1962@me.com
Registration is required for this trip and it will be limited to 6 participants. Please email Paul to register. Please bring an \$8 parking fee.

This trip is specifically designed for beginning to more experienced birders in a location with paved trails, handicapped parking, and fully accessible restrooms. Whether you walk, use a wheelchair, or a walker, this trip is for you. We will travel along paved trails and hard-packed dirt at Lake Solano Park, a short drive from Sacramento. The lake is a good area for lingering ducks including possible Barrow's Goldeneye and Hooded Merganser. Phainopepla and Brown Creepers are possible, and Pileated Woodpecker have been found in the area. Bring water, a snack, and a smart phone if you have one. Heavy rain or high wind cancels the trip.

Directions and confirmation of exact meeting location and time will be provided upon registration.

River Bend Park

Saturday, April 13, 7:30 a.m.

Expected length: 3 – 3 ½ hours
Leader: Dana Miller-Blair (916) 947-9397
djmlair@gmail.com

A Sac County Park Pass or \$7 entry fee is required for all vehicles. We will walk through oak woodland and then along the river. We will be looking for small woodland birds, woodpeckers, Red-shouldered Hawk, and possibly Great Horned Owl. We will also have opportunities to see birds on the river. Walk will end by 11 a.m.

Meet Dana at the main picnic area/river rafting exit. From the entry kiosk, enter the park and bear left at the information sign. Drive .31 miles to stop sign, proceed straight ahead another .17 miles, then turn left at the sign for "River rafting exit/main picnic area." Proceed another .2 miles to the parking lot with white dumpster on the right and bathrooms to the left.

From Folsom Blvd, between Bradshaw and Mather Field Road, take Rod Beaudry Dr north into the park.

Beginning Birder Walk, William Pond Park

Sunday, April 14

Maximum number of participants: 10
Registration is required for this trip. Contact Larry Hickey at: larryhickey1@gmail.com; put *Beginning Birder* in the subject line. Registrants will be emailed the meeting time and exact location. These beginners' field trips are designed to introduce new birders to the fun of birding. Limited to 10 adults per trip, with three Audubon trip leaders, it is a low-key introduction to finding and identifying birds. On this trip we'll talk about habitat, field marks, and bird behavior, as we look at individual birds.

Sweetwater Creek

Saturday, April 14, 7 a.m.

Expected length: 3-4 hours
Leader: Richard Barbieri, (916) 761-1124
offleash227@gmail.com
Registration is required for this trip, and it will be limited to 8 participants. Please email Richard to register.

At this favorite spring hotspot, we should find wildflowers in bloom and may hear the song of the Yellow-breasted Chat. Other possibilities are Lazuli Buntings, Wrentits, California

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Field Trips April 1 — May 15 Continued from previous page

Thrashers, migrating hummingbirds, and colorful warblers. Rain cancels.

Meet at the south side of the Bella Bru parking lot in the Raley's shopping center in El Dorado Hills. From Hwy 50 east take Exit #30B; turn right on El Dorado Hills Blvd and go north under the freeway to the shopping center on the right.

Meiss Road Evening Trip

Wednesday, April 17, 5:45 p.m.

Expected length: 2 ½ hours

Leader: Chris Conard, (916) 203-1610
conardc@gmail.com

Registration is required for this trip, and it will be limited to 15 participants. Please email Chris to register.

This evening tour of Meiss Rd in eastern Sacramento County offers a good chance for Lesser Nighthawks, as well as other grassland birds. Horned Larks and Meadowlarks will be in full song. Grasshopper Sparrows have been hard to find the past few years but are possible. Plan for portions of the road being bumpy but passable in most vehicles. The best chance for nighthawks will be after sunset but before complete darkness sets in.

Directions and confirmation of exact meeting location and time will be provided upon registration.

Pine Hill/Kanaka Valley

Saturday, April 20, 7 a.m.

Expected length: 5 hours

Leader: Chris Conard

Registration is required for this trip and it is limited to 20 participants.

See registration details below.

The preserve was established to protect rare native plants in El Dorado County that occur only on the specialized soils of the Pine Hill area. It stretches from Folsom Lake in the north to Hwy 50 in the south and contains more than 4,000 acres. Plan to visit Kanaka Valley, with a mix of oak woodland and chaparral. Chris will look for California Thrashers, Bell's Sparrows, migrating warblers, and, on a clear day, great views of the Sierra and the surrounding geography. A botanist will be on the trip to provide background on the rare plants. Be prepared for three miles of moderate walking.

Pre-registration is required and limited to 20 participants through Pine Hill Preserve: <https://eldoradocnps.org/events/pine-hill-preserve-tour-kanaka-valley-bird-hike-chris-conard-cnps-php/>

Effie Yeaw Nature Center, Family Nature Walk

Saturday, April 20, 10:30 a.m.

Paid registration is required through Effie Yeaw Nature Center

Please see sacnaturecenter.net for registration and other details.

Join Audubon birding leaders Cliff Feldheim and Rachael Cowan as well as Nature Center docents, for a family friendly nature walk at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center in Carmichael. Acorn Woodpeckers, Wild Turkeys, and other resident birds such as towhees and Bush-tits will be active. Families and individuals are encouraged to enjoy a one-hour walk in the lovely Nature Area with naturalists and birders who know the area and enjoy sharing their knowledge.

Traylor Ranch Bird Sanctuary

Sunday, April 21, 7:30 a.m.

Expected length: 3-4 hours

Leaders: Mary Forrester (530) 209-0826
cmforrester@yahoo.com and Susan Goodrich

This morning walk among the 88 acres of recreational land located in Penryn is a great walk for beginners as well as more experienced birders. Join Mary and Susan in finding interesting birds such as Western Bluebird, Tree Swallows, California Quail and Red-shoulder Hawks in these open oak woodlands. A clean port-a-loo is available at this location. It is about a half-mile walk from the parking area.

Meet Mary and Susan at the Traylor Ranch Parking Area off Humphrey Rd. From Sacramento, take I-80 to Sierra College Blvd in Rocklin, exit 109. Turn left and follow Sierra College Blvd 4.8 miles to English Colony Way. Turn right on to English Colony Way. In 1 mile turn right on Humphrey Road. The parking lot is .4 miles ahead on the right.

Beeks Bight Family Friendly Trip

Thursday, April 25, 7:30 a.m.

Expected length: 3-4 hours

Leader: Nicole Barden (530) 304-5461
folsomlake@ports-ca.us and Rich Howard

Registration is required for this trip, and it will be limited to 15 participants. Please email Nicole to register.

Join Environmental Educator Nicole and SAS volunteer Rich Howard to explore what this popular birding location has to offer! We will be on the lookout for our early spring feathered friends like hummingbirds, California Thrasher, and Wrentit. Migrant warblers, vireos, and flycatchers are also a possibility. Open to all birding levels, this trip will be slow-paced, and

we will be taking the time to appreciate bird behavior along the way. We will be listening for birds as much as looking for them and will be keeping an e-Bird list as we go. Beginning birders and young birders are encouraged to join.

Directions and confirmation of exact meeting location and time will be provided upon registration.

Sierra Discovery Trail, Emigrant Gap Accessible Trip

Saturday, April 27, 7:30 a.m.

at meeting place, 9 a.m. at the trailhead

Expected length: 2 hours on the trail

Leader: Paul Miller, (916) 768-7503
Pjmiller1962@me.com

Registration is required for this trip and it is limited to 8 participants. Please email Paul to register.

This interpretive trail near Nevada City is just under a one mile loop, is easy walking and considered wheelchair and mobility accessible. A great way to experience the western Sierra conifer forest at an elevation of 5,200 ft, we will explore birds on a well-maintained, shady trail along the Bear River, see a waterfall and possibly an American Dipper in action.

Directions and confirmation of exact meeting location and time will be provided upon registration.

Knickerbocker Creek - Auburn State Recreation Area

Sunday, April 28, 7:30 a.m.

Expected Length: 5-6 hours

Leader: Timothy Jackson, (530) 558-5164
eldoradobirds@yahoo.com

We will look (and listen) for songbirds, raptors, woodpeckers, game birds, and hummingbirds in a three to four mile walk through predominately oak grasslands with some pockets of chaparral. We'll visit a couple of ponds early in the walk to look for wetland species and then parallel part of the creek which feeds the north fork of the American River. We'll be on the lookout for incoming breeding season migrants and a few lingering non-breeding season migrants. The trip should last until noon or 1 pm. Depending on precipitation the trails may be muddy and bordered by wet grass.

Meet Tim at the Northside Elementary School parking lot at 7:30 a.m. The address is 860 Cave Valley Rd. Cool, CA 95614.

Directions from Highway 50

(recommended route): From Sacramento head east and leave highway 50 at exit 30B. This will cloverleaf onto El Dorado Hills Blvd heading north. At approximately 5 miles the road crosses Green Valley Rd and becomes Salmon Falls Rd. Continue on Salmon Falls Rd for a little under 12 miles. Turn right on Salmon Falls Cutoff Rd and in a few hundred feet turn left onto Hwy 49 heading north. Go about three miles and turn left onto Cave Valley Rd. Park in the Northside Elementary School lot on the left.

Previous trip eBird checklists:

2019 - <https://ebird.org/checklist/S55516921>

2023 - <https://ebird.org/checklist/S135606856>

Reichmuth Park

Friday, May 3, 7:30 a.m.

Expected length: 1 – 1 ½ hours

Leader: Eric Johnson, (916) 524-4311
corporateeric@yahoo.com

Registration is required for this trip and it is limited to 6 participants. Please email Eric to register.

Join Eric on an easy walk through Reichmuth Park in the South Area of Sacramento. In his own words, "Reichmuth is the spot inside the city of Sacramento with the most different species seen, sitting pretty at 183. It's our own birding box of chocolates—you never know what'll show up next!"

Directions and confirmation of exact meeting location and time will be provided upon registration.

Bobelaine Audubon Sanctuary

Saturday, May 4, 8 a.m.

Expected length: 3-4 hours

Leader: Maureen Geiger (916) 281-6652
mkgeiger@comcast.net

The Bobelaine Audubon Sanctuary 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 Maureen for about a 2.5 mile walk along the trails to the River's Overlook looking for resident and migrating birds, and enjoy this lush habitat along the Feather River. There is an accessible port-a-potty in the parking lot.

Meet at the Bobelaine Sanctuary Parking Lot. From Sacramento, take I-5 north, then Hwy 99 north toward Yuba City. About 2 miles north of the

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Field Trips April 1 — May 15

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Feather River Bridge, turn right on Laurel Ave.

Follow Laurel to the dead end at the Bobelaine parking lot.

Bannister Park to Sacramento Bar

Sunday, May 5, 7:30 a.m.

Expected length: 3 hours

Leader: Stan Hunter (530) 902-8462

Stanton.hunter@gmail.com

On this morning walk through the woods to the American River, you will see and hear a nice variety of resident birds and spring migrants. Possibilities include Phainopepla and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. This is a great trip for beginning and more experienced birders. Meet Stan in the parking lot at the end of Bannister Road. From Highway 50, drive north on Sunrise Blvd; turn left on Fair Oaks Blvd. Take Fair Oaks Blvd to Bannister Rd and turn left to go south toward the river. Park in the parking lot. No permit needed.

♿ Sierra Discovery Trail, Emigrant Gap Accessible Trip

Saturday, May 11, 7:30 a.m. at meeting place, or 9 a.m. at the trailhead

Expected length: 2 hours on the trail

Leader: Paul Miller, (916) 768-7503

Pjmiller1962@me.com

Maximum number of participants: 8

Registration is required for this trip and it is limited to 8 participants. Please email Paul to register.

This interpretive trail near Nevada City is just under a one mile loop, is easy walking and considered wheelchair and mobility accessible. A great way to experience the western Sierra conifer forest at an elevation of 5,200 ft., we will explore birds on a well-maintained, shady trail along the Bear River, see a waterfall and possibly an American Dipper in action.

Directions and confirmation of exact meeting location and time will be provided upon registration.

Spenceville Wildlife Area

Sunday, May 12, 7 a.m.

Expected Length: 6 hours

Leader: Richard Barbieri, (916) 761-1124

offleash227@gmail.com

This scenic recreational area of rolling hillsides, streams, reservoirs, and ponds offers a variety of wildlife. This trip will include several short walks over uneven terrain. Possible birds include Yellow-breasted Chat, Lewis's Woodpecker, warblers, and more. Bring lunch, plenty of water, and dress for changeable weather.

Meet Richard at the Park & Ride by Brookfield's Restaurant, 1817 Taylor Rd, in Roseville. From Sacramento on I-80, take the Eureka Rd offramp (Exit 105A) and continue straight through the signal light at Eureka Rd and you'll be on Taylor Rd. Turn left just past the Shell Station, and park on the right in the Park & Ride.

Trip Leader Spotlight



SAS has always been known for the many and varied field trips we offer to members and non-members alike, consistent with our mission of outreach and education. We are fortunate to have dedicated volunteers willing to give their valuable time and knowledge to help meet this mandate, and share their love of birds. This will be the first in a series of articles to showcase our field trip leaders. We hope this will enhance your enjoyment and appreciation of our field trips!

Chris Conard

Serious birding, and ultimately leading trips for Sacramento Audubon, started through my work at the Bufferlands, an open space buffer surrounding the Sacramento Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant, beginning in 1997. As I spent nearly every day in the field and much of my free time hiking, a latent interest in birds that had waned in my teens came back with a vengeance. Shortly thereafter, I joined John Trochet on his Tall Forest survey at Cosumnes River Preserve and was particularly impressed by his ability to identify dozens of birds by sound at first light, before the walk even began. I was hooked. Learning comes easiest from doing, especially if you really enjoy it, and there's no end to what can be learned about birds and their environment.

Growing up in semi-rural Sonoma County, the first bird I identified on my own was a Say's Phoebe. I moved with my parents to Loomis and then attended Sac State, majoring in philosophy and government, with a vague idea of going into academia. It was there I met my future wife, Kimya Lambert, and we both spent a year in AmeriCorps, focusing on habitat restoration and environmental education. That was where I deepened my love of working and being outside. I shifted my focus to restoration and began plotting a career in that field when I made my way to the Bufferlands, going back to school part-time. The Bufferlands found a place for me despite my lack of a natural resources degree. My schooling, while working full-time,



Chris Conard.
Photo by Kimya Lambert

began to sputter, but my learning and focus, especially on birds, never did.

I really enjoy sharing what I've had the privilege to learn in over 26 years of habitat restoration and biological survey work at the Bufferlands, through traveling, and working on some paid but mostly volunteer bird survey and conservation projects. Since 2007, I've submitted a list to eBird nearly every day and use that wonderful project to record the birds I see, as a personal diary, and as a way of contributing to the collective knowledge of bird distribution and trends. I serve as an eBird reviewer for Sacramento County, compile the Folsom Christmas Bird Count, and have written a column, "Seasonal Sightings," for *The Observer* since 2000. I spent 15 years on the Central Valley Bird Club board, including six years as president. I've written quite a few, but not nearly enough, papers on local bird and conservation issues, mostly for the journal *Central Valley Birds*. Perhaps most significantly, with Ed Pandolfino, Lily Douglas, and Tim Manolis, I co-authored *Sacramento County Breeding Birds: a Tale of Two Atlases and Three Decades of Change*. Beyond Sacramento, I love visiting different habitats and seeing their representative birds. Biogeography is my primary interest, with birds being perhaps its most accessible and vital representation. California, with its list of superlatives (tallest, oldest, biggest, highest, lowest, hottest, driest, most), is a never-ending source of inspiration, as is the desert Southwest, and too many other places to name.

Field Trip Findings

Woodland Wastewater Treatment Plant, 3/10

Leader Mark Martucci reported: Seventeen people detected 62 species of birds on a very comfortable overcast morning in Yolo County. Highlights included **Canvasback**, **Redhead**, **Lesser Scaup**, **Western Grebe**, **Clark's Grebe**, **Long-billed Curlew**, **Barn Owl**, **Bonaparte's Gull**, **Loggerhead Shrike** and **Yellow-headed Blackbird**.

Hidden Falls Regional Park, 3/7

Leader Peter Perrine reported: Eight of us enjoyed a beautiful spring day at Hidden Falls Regional Park, and for six of us, it was the first time there. We saw and heard the expected species, such as **Acorn Woodpeckers**, **White-breasted Nuthatches**, **Western Bluebirds** (which we nearly missed), **Black Phoebes** and **Spotted Towhees**. **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** and **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were abundant, almost overwhelmingly so on occasion. Some nice finds were one calling **Golden-crowned Kinglet**, two **Rufous-crowned Sparrows**, a **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** (first this spring for all of us), and two **Steller's Jays** (twice as many as **California Scrub-Jays**). **Orange-crowned Warblers** were singing throughout the morning, and we got good looks at one, which was a life bird for one person. The best bird of the day, though, was an **American Dipper**, well seen by all from the Coon Creek overlook. With 35 bird species seen, and spring flowers like Shooting Stars and Buttercups starting to show in the fresh new green grass, we had a most enjoyable outing.

Lake Solano, 3/6

Leader Bill Bianco reported: Four of us started the day with cool and overcast skies. We ended our walk with a total species count of 47. Over our 3.75 hour leisurely walk we had good sightings of **Belted Kingfisher**, **Osprey**, **Hermit Thrush**, **Phainopepla**, **Orange-crowned Warbler**, breeding behavior of **Red-shouldered Hawks**, **Red-breasted Sapsucker**, **Wood Ducks**, **Hooded** and **Common Mergansers**, naming a few. At lunch break the sun came out and we saw the only **hummingbird** after our walk. Very enjoyable morning for all.

Bobelaine, 3/3

Leader Maureen Geiger reported that the trip was canceled because of flooded trails.

Coyote and University Ponds, 3/2

Nancy Gronert, co-leader with Amy McDonald, reported: The storms held off for the Saturday morning trip to Coyote Pond Park off Highway 65. Five birders braved the chilly temperatures to be greeted by flocks of **Lark Sparrows** with their vivid faces. The group strolled along the ponds to find a nice selection of waterbirds: **Common Gallinule**, **Pied-billed Grebes**, **American Wigeon**, **American Coots**, a **Great Blue Heron**, **Great Egrets**, with **Tree Swallows** and **Rough-winged Swallows** skimming Whistler Pond. **Northern Flickers**, **Acorn**, **Downy** and **Nuttall's Woodpeckers** checked out the trees along with flocks of **Western Bluebirds** and **Yellow-rumped Warblers**. Along with a **Great-tailed Grackle**, pairs of **Red-tailed Hawks**, **Red-shouldered Hawks**, and **American Kestrel** showed along our walk. The group spied a **Merlin** dangling

some sparrow—hopefully House—towards the end of the walk. The usual winter suspects of **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**, **White-** and **Golden-crowned Sparrows**, **White-breasted Nuthatches**, a **Hermit Thrush**, and **American Robins** were visible as well.

Mather Lake, 2/28

Susan Goodrich, co-leader with Jane Van Kessel, reported: 12 enthusiastic birders spent a clear cool and sunny morning exploring Mather Lake, starting with a plethora of parking lot peeps, including **Great-tailed Grackles**, **Brown-headed Cowbirds**, and **Brewer's Blackbirds**. The **Green Heron** eluded us on our first pass of the riprap, but a sharp eye spied it the second time around, and everyone got a view of its dark green back and chestnut neck shining in the sun. Lots of terrific spotters helped spy a variety of our local winter residents, including **Western Bluebirds**, **Western Meadowlark**, **Northern Flickers**, a variety of **finches** and **sparrows**, and, not one, but two **Red-breasted Sapsuckers!** Spring was in the air as we watched pairs of **Bushtits**, **Tree Swallows**, **White-tailed Kites**, and even **Red-tailed Hawks** proclaiming their territories and pairing up. We were able to get scope views of the **White-tailed Kites** constructing a nest. The lake yielded a number of **Pied-billed Grebes**, **Double-crested Cormorants**, a couple of **Common Gallinules**, and a surprise showing of a group of **Northern Shovelers!** A bittersweet delight was heard in the overhead call of **Sandhill Cranes** gathering and flying north to their summer breeding grounds. The very pleasant morning with a great group of folks concluded with a surprise visit and eventual counting of five otters playing in the lake! eBird list here: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S163204128>

Ancil Hoffman Park, 2/25

Co-leaders Rich Howard and Dana Miller-Blair reported: We arrived at 7:30 a.m. to meet 21 participants (a mix of experienced and new birdwatchers) and gratefully accepted assistance from Betty Cooper, Cathie LaZier, and Jane Van Kessel. The morning was sunny, with a few thin clouds, and windless with temperatures in the 50s–60s, making for very pleasant birding. Nest building is commencing—we watched **Yellow-billed Magpies** adding to their nests, **Bushtits** flying in and out of their sock-like nest and a **House Wren** exploring holes for nesting. Male and female **Wood Ducks** were in the trees looking for nest holes. Highlights of the trip were four **Chipping Sparrows**, a **Phainopepla**, a good variety of woodpeckers including **Downy**, **Nuttall's**, **Acorn**, and **Northern Flickers**. We had great looks at **Red-shouldered Hawks**. A flock of **California Quail** was out in the open for all to see. **Tree Swallows** are returning to the valley—we saw four. The river was quite high, so water birds were scarce, but we did get one **Killdeer**, and some ducks that will migrate away soon—three **Buffleheads** and one **Common Goldeneye**, along with **Mallards** and **Common Mergansers**. The work which had been done to create salmon nesting habitat resulted in what was formerly a peninsula now becoming an island, which is not accessible to us now. We had a flyby of **Greater White-fronted Geese**. **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were abundant, and we saw many **White-crowned** and **Golden-crowned Sparrows**, as well as **Dark-eyed Juncos**. Along with the expected

American Crows, we saw one **Common Raven**. We had a total of 47 species for the trip, but after the trip ended, and most participants had left, four of us watched and heard two large flocks of **Sandhill Cranes**, as well as **White-throated Swifts** and more **Tree Swallows**. The Bird list is available here: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S162928417>.

Gray Lodge WLR, 2/24

Leader Paul Miller reported: Four participants joined me for an accessible birding trip at Gray Lodge Wildlife Area. There is a wonderful paved trail starting at Lot #14 and leading to a raised overlook. While the **Snow Geese** numbers were lower than previous weeks there were many waterfowl to observe. Highlights of the trip included a mature **Bald Eagle**, **Ruddy Ducks**, **American Avocet**, **Common Goldeneye**, and **Buffleheads**.

Sacramento WLR, 2/18

Leader Cliff Feldheim reported: Presumably because of the weather, we had a low turnout for our trip. With all the rain we have been getting I was concerned that we would not see the abundance of waterfowl one would expect this time of year, as they would be spread out using newly flooded areas. Duck numbers were lower than expected and of the 11 species we saw **Northern Shoveler**, **Northern Pintail**, and **Gadwall** were the most abundant. Although we did get very good looks at **Blue-winged Teal** on the pond nearest the viewing platform. **Greater White-fronted**, **Snow**, and **Ross's Geese** numbers were similarly low with not more than 150 of each species seen. Given the low numbers of waterfowl, we were pleasantly surprised to see three different adult **Bald Eagles**, two of which gave us great looks, as well as one **Peregrine Falcon**. Leaving the Refuge we drove through some of the rice fields south and east of the Refuge and did see some fields with excess of 3,000 **Snow/Ross's Geese** in them. Despite the relatively slow day of birding we managed 46 species of birds and enjoyed the break from the rain.

Sacramento River Delta Cruise, 2/17

Leader Sonja Sorbo reported: Mother Nature nearly derailed this trip with an atmospheric river—we nervously watched the weather forecast in the days leading up to the trip. Fortunately, the storm held off until the afternoon, so we boldly showed up at Antioch Marina and our charter boat launched. 23 birders had a great day; despite overcast skies, there was only light wind and occasional light rain. We were able to enjoy views of thousands of birds, (62 species total) including a couple of unexpected sightings. After departing the marina, our first raptor was a **Bald Eagle** on the nest. The next several miles produced multiple **Red-tailed Hawks**, a pair of **Northern Harriers**, and a **White-tailed Kite**, the latter gracefully hovering above a field. The most memorable raptor sighting of the day was a pair of **Great Horned Owls** hunkered down on a marker platform in the middle of the channel! Perhaps the cage-like structure on top of the marker seemed enough like a nest to make them happy....later in the day we saw yet another **GHOW** perched on a channel marker, giving the photographers a field day. Cruising down the channels, we noted several large groups of **scaup** and an occasional **Bufflehead** and

continued on next page

Field Trip Findings

Continued from previous page



Great Horned Owl. Photo by Ken Stites

Common Goldeneye. Ducks in general were scarce, in keeping with results from recent Christmas Bird Counts. We did manage to see a few **Mallards** and **Northern Shovelers**. It seemed as though we couldn't travel more than a few hundred yards without a **Double-crested Cormorant** crossing our path—they were everywhere (as were **American Coots**). Many pilings, utility towers, and channel markers were occupied by **cormorants**. There were also several huge trees supporting "cormorant condominiums" with the birds coming and going to and from a multitude of nests.

As we proceeded around the various islands, we discovered multiple fields with huge gatherings of **Snow Geese**, increasing by the moment as geese flying in skeins in the sky above dropped down to join the crowd. Our total for the day was well over 15,000. **Greater White-fronted Geese** were also present, but in much smaller numbers. To our delight, we noted a couple of hundred **Sandhill Cranes** sandwiched into some of the fields, looking as regal as ever. One pair of fields was particularly attractive to **Tundra Swans**, supporting approximately two hundred of the magnificent creatures. Although our attention was focused on waterfowl, we also tallied other species including **California, Western, and Herring Gull, Forster's Tern, Western and Pied-billed Grebe, American White Pelican, Belted Kingfisher, Tree Swallow, Anna's Hummingbird, Black Phoebe, Song Sparrow, American Bittern, Green Heron, juvenile Black-crowned Night Heron, Great Egret, and Great Blue Heron.** Heard were **Wrentit** and **Marsh Wren**. Several times, the boat moved close to the levee and flushed scores of **Western Meadowlarks**. Their gorgeous song was frequent enough to almost provide a soundtrack for the cruise. While heading back to the marina, we passed a field with a spectacular murmuration of blackbirds in progress. It was mesmerizing! At the end of the cruise, our boat turned into the marina entrance and behold! A **Red-throated Loon** paddled around, unfazed by a boatful of birders passing just a few yards away who were snapping photos right and left....it was a delightful surprise and lifer for many in the group. A quick walk around the marina by some of the birders produced views of **White- and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Fox Sparrow, Spotted Towhee, Northern Mockingbird, Great-tailed Grackle, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Bushtit.** After that, it was a fast dash to the vehicles to head for home before the atmospheric river arrived.

Seasonal Sightings February 1 – 29, 2024

February is still winter, but some birds certainly have spring on their minds. Adding to the early-breeding **Anna's Hummingbirds** and **Great Horned Owls**, by February, herons, egrets, and cormorants are working on their nests. **Tree Swallows** are conspicuous by mid-January, but by the end of the month, all of the regular swallows except for **Purple Martins** had been reported. A Tufted Duck was reported in early February from the Laguna Lakes area of Elk Grove, but apparently didn't stick around. Up to five **Red-breasted Mergansers** were on Folsom Lake, mostly seen from Beals Pt, continuing in a season with an unusually high number of this locally rare species. The male **Costa's Hummingbird** in northeast Davis continued from last month through at least 2/5.

The shorebird highlight was the continuing **Mountain Plovers** in the fields along Hwy 45 in Yolo County, just south of the Colusa County line. There was a high of over 140, but the most impressive report was of 113 on the late afternoon of 2/24. As darkness fell, about a dozen small groups flew east, calling, as they continued into the darkness. Unbeknownst to most local birders, this traditional viewing site, at least that evening, was not where the birds stayed to roost. Perhaps they continued east over the Sacramento River and into Sutter County. At the old hotspot south of Dixon, a high of 38 **Mountain Plovers** were reported this month. The only **Glaucous Gull** was found on 2/10 off Yolo CR 104 to the west of the Yolo Central Landfill, and a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was at the same location on 2/5. A **Red-throated Loon** was reported from 2/16-2/20 on the Deep Water Channel west of the Bridgeway Island Pond and farther to the north on 2/26.

There has been a slight uptick of **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** reports in recent years, including one on 2/28 at Cache Creek Preserve. Perhaps more people are looking at sapsuckers more carefully. A **Hairy Woodpecker**, always a nice find in Sacramento County, was on the south side of Lake Natoma near the Willow Creek access during the first half of the month. A female **Vermilion Flycatcher** was a nice find at the Williams Cemetery on 2/28, as was a **Tropical Kingbird** in Suisun City on 2/24-2/28. A **Plumbeous Vireo** was photographed at Davis Community Park on 2/3. Tapering off from earlier in the season, there was just one **Winter Wren** report, on 2/16, from Lake Solano. There were several **Red Crossbill** reports at the Old City Cemetery in Sacramento



Tree Swallow. Photo by Daniel Brown

during the second half of the month, including a recording on 2/17 of seven with calls consistent with "type-3" or Western hemlock crossbills (<https://ebird.org/news/recrtype/>); 12 **Red Crossbills** were also found visiting a Roseville yard on 2/23. A **Swamp Sparrow** turned up at the Bufferlands on 2/1. Despite moderate flooding and a very skulky bird, five people were able to see it through 2/6. It was seen again briefly on 2/27. On the topic of skulky birds, the **Ovenbird** continued at William Lake Park, as did the **Summer Tanager**. One of the year's highlights so far was a beautiful male **Cape May Warbler** found on 2/10 visiting an Elk Grove backyard. It was seen by several visiting birders through 2/12.

To view photos of some of the highlights, visit www.sacramentoaudubon.org/bird-sightings, and then click on the highlighted eBird checklists.

The Sacramento Area as covered here lies between Hwy 20 to the north, Hwy 12 to the south, and the 1000-foot contour to the east and west, plus all of Sacramento and Yolo counties. Many reports first appeared on the Central Valley Bird Club listserv (groups.io/g/centralvalleybirds) and in eBird (ebird.org). It is impossible to list everyone, but we thank the following for their reports: Steve Abbott, Theresa Blue, Dan Brown, Lyann Comrack, Konshau Duman, Chris Dunford, Andy Engilis, Jr., Gil Ewing, Linda Gal, Susan Goodrich, Joshua Greenfield, Nancy Gronert, Cliff Hawley, Marcel Holyoak, Scott Hoppe, Emmett Iverson, Adam Kucharek, Jeri Langham, Barbara Leary, Mark Martucci, Roger Muskat, Adam Panto, Zane Pickus, Ron Pozzi, Samuel Schmidt, Steve Scott, Kevin Thomas, John Trochet, Dan Williams, and Lynette Williams. Thanks to everyone for their reports—without them, this column would not be possible.

—Chris Conard

Western Screech-Owl Boxes at Del Paso Regional Park

The owl boxes are up! Last September the SAS Board unanimously approved funding for the construction and installation of two Western Screech Owl boxes at Del Paso Regional Park. With the City of Sacramento's approval, the boxes, built and installed by Richard Barbieri, went up in early February. Now, we wait and watch.

—Daphne Reimer



Western Screech-Owl box.
Photo by Daphne Reimer

Project Phoebe Needs Your Help

Project Phoebe is an urban ecology research project investigating the lives led by Black Phoebes in the cities of Sacramento, West Sacramento, Davis and Woodland.



The project was started by three UC Davis graduate students who are interested in how well even common “backyard birds” are coping with different challenges posed by the urban environment. Our team is currently searching for Black Phoebe nests in parks and neighborhoods in the cities mentioned above, and we would greatly appreciate the help of the local birding community with this! If you see a Black Phoebe displaying nesting behavior or spot a mud cup nest under a roof, you can let our team know through the “report a sighting” forms on our website (https://projectphoebe.com/?page_id=576) or by contacting us directly at ighaliburton@ucdavis.edu. If a Phoebe is nesting on your home and you would be willing to let us monitor the nest as part of our research, that would be especially great to know about. Thank you!

Thank You Photographers

Thank you to all the photographers who have contributed photos for the new species on the recently updated Checklist of Birds of the Sacramento Area. We still could use a few more but appreciate all that have been donated. Thanks go to Ray Rozema, Daniel Lee Brown, Susie Nishio, Paul Miller, Ed Harper, Susan Goodrich, Timothy Jackson, Chris Conard and Larry Hickey. You can see all of the new photos by clicking on the species name on Checklist <https://www.sacramentoaudubon.org/sacramento-birds-checklist> or in the Gallery of Birds <https://www.sacramentoaudubon.org/gallery-of-birds>.



Surf Scoter by Susie Nishio



Plumbeous Vireo by Daniel Lee Brown



Sanderling by Ray Rozema

Birds: A Common Conservation Language

The latest episode of the **All Land is Beautiful** podcast features an interview with our very own Chris Conard. You can listen here: <https://mmgorham11.podbean.com/e/birds-a-common-conservation-language-with-chris-conard/>.

According to Chris:

The conversation centers on wildlife success stories in unlikely places, as well as concerning trends. We talk about the Bufferlands, habitat in the Sacramento area, the Sacramento County Breeding Bird Atlas effort, Burrowing Owls, and other species trends. We also briefly discuss opportunities to learn more about local birding areas with Sacramento Audubon.

I Found a Baby Bird. What Do I Do?

At some point, nearly everyone who spends time outdoors finds a baby bird—one that is unable to fly well and seems lost or abandoned. Your first impulse may be to help the young bird, but in the great majority of cases the young bird doesn't need help. In fact, intervening often makes the situation worse. Here's how to determine whether to take action:

The first thing to do is to figure out if the baby bird is a nestling or a fledgling.

Most of the baby birds people find are fledglings. These are young birds that have just left the nest, and can't fly yet, but are still under the care of their parents, and do not need our help. Fledglings are feathered and capable of hopping or flitting, with toes that can tightly grip your finger or a twig. These youngsters are generally adorable and fluffy, with a tiny stub of a tail.

When fledglings leave their nest they rarely return, so even if you see the nest it's not a good idea to put the bird back in—it will hop right back out. Usually there is no reason to intervene at all beyond putting the bird on a nearby perch out of harm's way and keeping pets indoors. The parents may be attending to four or five young scattered in different directions, but they will return to care for the one you have found. You can watch from a distance to make sure the parents are returning to care for the fledgling.

If the baby bird is sparsely feathered and not capable of hopping, walking, flitting, or gripping tightly to your finger, it's a nestling. If so, the nest is almost certainly nearby. If you can find the nest (it may be well hidden), put the bird back as quickly as possible. Don't worry—parent birds do not recognize their young by smell. They will not abandon a baby if it has been touched by humans. If the nest has been destroyed you can make a new one, place the chick back inside and watch to see if the parents come back.

If you have found both parents dead, the young bird is injured, you can't find the nest, or are absolutely certain that the bird was orphaned, then your best course of action is to bring it to a wildlife rehabilitator. (In the Sacramento area, contact Wildlife Care Associate of Sacramento). A sick, injured or orphaned baby bird may need emergency care until you can get it to a wildlife rehabilitator.

Bottom line: remember that the vast majority of “abandoned” baby birds are perfectly healthy fledglings whose parents are nearby and watching out for them.

—Information from the *All About Birds* website,
www.allaboutbirds.org,
© Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

SAS New Members

Please welcome these new members:

Mark Biddlecomb
Lori Heuer
Nondra Khali
Pamela Lindell
Ron Lingren
Doug Wenger

Thank You For Your Generous Donations!

General Fund

James Bennett, Mark Biddlecomb, Tom Biglione, Jean & Bob Bonar, Wayne Blunk, Betty J. Cooper, Ellen Dutkiewicz, Mel & Donell Duvall, Wallace Etterbeek, Stan Ford, Bruce Forman, Daniel Griffin, David Harlow, Monte Ikemire, Anne Jennings, Terrance & Marion Jones, Kale Marzion, Regina & R. David Minister, Napa-Solano Audubon Society, Carmen Pereira, Lynn Saxelby, Rick Skehen, Susan E. Solarz, Jon Wato, Blackbaud Giving Fund, SAS received a bequest from the estate of Cheryl R. Engel

Education and Conservation Fund

Tom Biglione, Jean & Bob Bonar, Douglas & Mary Davy, Timothy D. Fitzer, Stan Ford, Jill Pease, Lynn Saxelby, Rick Skehen

Bobelaine Sanctuary

Tom Biglione, Mary Louise Flint, Stan Ford, Truman Holtzclaw, Lynn Saxelby, Rick Skehen

Many thanks to all of you for your continued support of Sacramento Audubon and its work in the community. Donations to the Bobelaine Sanctuary are encouraged to help defray the cost of management.

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Mission Statement Sacramento Audubon Society

The mission of the Sacramento Audubon Society is to:



SACRAMENTO AUDUBON SOCIETY

- Promote the protection and scientific study of wild birds.
- Foster the enjoyment and appreciation of wild birds through community outreach.
- Encourage, support, and provide environmental educational opportunities.
- Advocate for the conservation of open space in the Sacramento region.

Sacramento Audubon Chapter Board Meetings

Please contact President, Paul Miller, at sacaudubonpresident@gmail.com to find out how the Board Meeting is being held. Board Meetings of the Sacramento Audubon Society are held the last Tuesday of the month, except for June, July, and December when no meetings are held.

The next board meeting is: Tuesday, April 30, 2024.

Minutes of Board Meetings can be found at sacramentoaudubon.org/board-minutes.

JOIN THE SACRAMENTO AUDUBON SOCIETY

Your membership supports the SAS mission of conservation, environmental education and protection of the region's natural ecosystems and diverse wildlife populations. Members receive our online newsletter, *The Observer*; so be sure to include your email address.

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If you would like to be added to the SAS Action Alert list, check here _____.

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White-tailed Kite Daniel Brown

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

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April General Meeting **Falkland Islands**

Presented by Michele McCormick

Thursday, April 18, 2024 at 7 p.m.

