

The Observer

Sacramento Audubon Society



General Meeting

There isn't a monthly speaker program in December, but you can attend November's meeting online via Zoom or in person at Effie Yeaw Nature Center. Join the Sacramento Audubon Society Board and other members at Effie Yeaw at 7 p.m. on Thursday, November 30 for **Monarch Butterflies - A Conservation Opportunity for Native Species** presented by Melissa Burns. Light refreshments will be available. To register for the online viewing or to learn more about the presentation, visit www.sacramentoaudubon.org/monthly-speaker.



Monarch Butterflies – A Conservation Opportunity for Native Species

Presented by Melissa Burns

Melissa Burns is the Western Monarch Coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. She works in the Pacific Southwest Regional Office here in Sacramento. In her role, Melissa supports and catalyzes western monarch conservation at a landscape scale by supporting science, managing data, leveraging resources, developing durable partnerships, and bridging the gap between research and land management. Melissa has 20 years of experience in wildlife and habitat conservation, is an avid birder, and loves learning and exploring with her family.

What Birding Means to Me

I wanted to start a short column highlighting the reasons our members enjoy birding. Whether you are brand new or have been birding all your life, please consider submitting. Birding is an activity that satisfies a wide range of interests and talents, from science to art. Please send us a short paragraph or two telling us why birding is part of your life. You can email me at sacaudubonpresident@gmail.com or just send a written letter to P.O. Box 160694, Sacramento CA 95816.

So I will kick this off...

Birding is my happy place. It's pretty much that simple and profound for me. I feel joyful and thankful to be alive when I'm out watching and photographing our sacred birds. There is a primal yearning in me to be "in the wild." Birds are omnipresent regardless of the time of year, and connect me to "the wild." For me it's both experiential and meditative.

Living with muscular dystrophy limits my physical abilities. But when I'm rolling around accessible birding locations in my super duper all-terrain wheelchair, there are no limits! Whether it's watching one of our common local birds, seeing migratory birds start to arrive, or getting a glimpse of a rarity, it fills me with awe. I love the statement from Frank Lloyd Wright: "I believe in God, I call it Nature." And yes, being with our sacred birds is a spiritual experience for me.

—Paul Miller, Sacramento Audubon President



Paul Miller leading an Audubon Accessible Birding Trip in 2022

Field Trips December 1, 2023 – January 14, 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.
- All trip leaders and participants, including children 5 and up, must be vaccinated against COVID 19.
- 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.) 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.

Wintering Raptors of the Valley (Meiss Road/Michigan Bar)

Sunday, December 3, 8 a.m.
Expected length: 6-7 hours
Leader: Craig Swolgaard (530) 334-3023
cswol@sbcglobal.net

A published study found that California's Central Valley is one of the richest wintering areas for raptors in the country. The trip will begin at Meiss and Dillard Roads and end at Clay Station and Dillard Roads following a 33 mile loop used as a survey route in a past study. Many species of raptors have been found along this productive drive during the winter months, including Golden Eagle, Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks, White-tailed Kite, Prairie Falcon, Merlin, and Burrowing Owl. This is also a good area to find Mountain Bluebirds in winter, and has potential for other vagrants. Bring a spotting scope if possible. Trip may go into early afternoon so bring water and food.

Meet at the small public parking lot on the northwest corner of Hwy 16 and Sunrise Blvd at 8 a.m. Because some of the route involves using pullouts on a busy highway, we should try to minimize the number of vehicles driven. Participants may arrange their own carpools at the meeting site. From Sacramento take Hwy 50 to Rancho Cordova and exit at Sunrise Blvd SOUTH. Follow Sunrise Blvd for several miles until you reach Highway 16. Turn right into the parking lot.

Gull Identification Trip

Wednesday, December 6, 8:30 a.m.
Leader: Ed Harper
Maximum number of participants: 10
REGISTRATION OPENS NOVEMBER 10.
Please email Sonja Sorbo ssgadoc@yahoo.com on or after November 10 if you would like to attend. Please put "Gull Trip" in the subject line.

Join Ed for an informative walk along the American River and a chance to sharpen your identification skills. 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. Herring, "Thayer's" (which is now considered a species of Iceland Gull), Glaucous-winged, California, Ring-billed, and Short-billed Gulls are all possibilities. Spotting scopes will be very useful and be sure to bring your field guides and bird apps for this intensive study.

The trip will end at noon. Directions and exact meeting time and place will be provided upon registration.

Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge

Saturday, December 9, 8 a.m.
Expected length: All Day
Leader: John York, (530) 320-4751
johnyork157@yahoo.com

John will be looking for the enormous flocks of ducks, geese, and swans that winter in the Valley, or stop to feed on their way south. This is also a good place for raptors, and Bald Eagles are a possibility. There is a 3.7 mile driving route and a great viewing platform as well. Bring lunch, snacks, and hydration, as the refuge has no restaurant. This is a good trip for new and experienced birders alike.

FRS radios are helpful on this trip. Note that there is a \$6 day use fee for each vehicle or buy a Duck Stamp (\$25) which supports all of our national wildlife refuges and is valid July 1 to the following June 30. Meet at the Bel Air shopping center on Arena Blvd. From Sacramento take I-5 north to Arena Blvd. Turn left (west) at the first stoplight which is Buckhorn Blvd, then turn right into the parking lot. Meet at the north side of the parking lot between Wells Fargo and Golden 1.

Lincoln Grasslands

Sunday, December 10, 8 a.m.
Expected Length: 7-8 hours
Leader: Richard Barbieri (916) 761-1124
Offleash227@gmail.com

The grasslands and farmlands surrounding Lincoln provide some of the best winter birding in the Sacramento Valley. Richard will search the back roads of Placer county for raptors, shorebirds ducks, swans, and sparrows, plus specialty species such as Tri-colored Blackbird and Lewis's Woodpecker. It is not unusual to find 90 species on this trip.

We will bird into the afternoon, so bring lunch and liquids, as well as scopes and FRS radios if you have them. Be prepared for a fast-paced trip! We will meet 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.

Beginning Birder Walk, William Pond Park

Sunday, December 10
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.

Bridgeway Island Pond, West Sacramento, Yolo County

Saturday, December 16, 8 a.m.
Expected length: 3 hours
Leader: Cliff Feldheim, (916) 217-2120
daughtersducks@gmail.com

This pond is known for its large numbers of Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teal, however, more than 200 species of birds have been seen on the pond and the surrounding habitats, and it is an eBird hotspot. Join Cliff for a morning walk to view a variety of bird species with a focus on waterbirds on the Pond and the adjacent Deep Water Shipping Channel. This trip involves walking on a level pathway of just over a mile, and climbing and descending a fairly steep levee path. Being a fish and wildlife biologist for 25 years in the Central Valley (currently with Ducks Unlimited), Cliff will provide background on the latest research and conservation efforts for certain species, and can provide information on the latest efforts in conservation and science on a variety of ecological topics, so bring your questions! Scopes can be a valuable asset. Please note that there are no restrooms.

Meet Cliff at the Bridgeway Island Pond, West Sacramento. From downtown Sacramento, take Hwy 50 west, cross over the Sacramento River and exit on Jefferson Blvd. Turn left onto Jefferson and right on Lake Washington Blvd. From Lake Washington Blvd, turn left onto Southport Pkwy. At 2.8 miles, turn right on Oakland Bay Dr, make an immediate right onto Bowen Island St, which turns into Solomon Island Rd, and take a right on Pender Island Rd into the cul-de-sac. Park at the end of the cul-de-sac and on surrounding streets.

Effie Yeaw Nature Center, Family Nature Walk

Saturday, December 16, 10:30 a.m.
Join Audubon birding leaders Lynne Tweten and Betty Cooper, 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 Bushtits will be active. Families and

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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. Registration is required through Effie Yeaw Nature Center. Please see sacnaturecenter.net for registration and other details.

Staten Island

Friday, December 22, 3 p.m.

Expected length: 2 hours

Leader: Bill Beckett, (916) 224-5165
wbeckett@galt.k12.ca.us

Meet at the silos on Staten Island Rd across from the entrance billboard for an evening fly in of Sandhill Cranes, Aleutian Cackling Geese, shorebirds, and other waterfowl. We'll also talk about what makes Staten Island the unique bird habitat that it is. Individuals will be using their cars to move from one birding stop to the next. Spotting scopes are not critical but advised. I will bring one to two to share. Mosquito repellent is advised. Meet Bill at the silos at M&T Staten Ranch 24734 N. Staten Island Rd. From I-5 Exit Walnut Grove Rd. Head west on Walnut Grove Rd. Turn Left on Staten Island Rd. Destination will be on the right.

Brannan Island

Thursday, December 28, 7:30 a.m.

Expected length: 5-6 hours

Leader: Dan Williams, (714) 943-1266
jaegermaestro@yahoo.com

Maximum number of participants: 10

Registration is required for this trip. Please email Dan to register.

Located near the southwestern tip of Sacramento County in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, Brannan Island State Recreation Area is surrounded by the Sacramento River on the west, Three-Mile Slough on

the southeast, and Seven-Mile Slough on the northeast. The sloughs provide opportunity to see both waterfowl and shorebirds. A three-mile flat paved loop trail, winding around the island, travels through riparian, woodland, and lawn habitat, with opportunity for everything from woodpeckers to sparrows. Parking and bathrooms are available at the site. A \$10 car day-use parking fee is required at the site. Directions and confirmation of exact meeting location and time will be provided upon registration.

Woodland Wastewater Treatment Plant, Yolo County

Tuesday, January 9, 8 a.m.

Expected Length: 3-4 hours

Leader: Mark Martucci, (916) 833-6722
matuchbirdman@yahoo.com

Woodland Wastewater Treatment Plant is an outstanding location for viewing wintering waterfowl, grebes, gulls, and shorebirds. We will spend three to four hours exploring the ponds and surrounding fields. If you have a scope, it would be very helpful.

To reach WWTP, take I-5 from Sacramento continuing past the Airport. Turn off on the first Woodland Exit, #536 Road 102.

Go south on Road 102 about one mile to the light at Road 24 on the left and Gibson Road on the right. Turn left onto Road 24 and continue to the gravel parking area near the north pond.

Sacramento Bar

Thursday, January 11, 8 a.m.

Expected length: 3-4 hours

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.

Meet Darrell at the Sacramento Bar Parking Lot. A Sacramento County Parks Pass or \$6 entry fee is required for all vehicles. (The fee is \$6 at the time of publication. Fees may increase in 2024.)

From Highway 50, drive north on Sunrise Blvd. Turn left on Fair Oaks Blvd and take the first left on Pennsylvania Ave. Follow Pennsylvania to the parking lot at the end on the right.

Bridgeway Island Pond, West Sacramento, Yolo County

Saturday, January 13, 8 a.m.

Expected length: 3 hours

Leader: Cliff Feldheim, (916) 217-2120
daughtersducks@gmail.com

This pond is known for its large numbers of Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teal, however, more than 200 species of birds have been seen on the pond and the surrounding habitats, and it is an eBird hotspot. Join Cliff for a morning walk to view a variety of bird species with a focus on waterbirds on the Pond and the adjacent Deep Water Shipping Channel. This trip involves walking on a level pathway of just over a mile, and climbing and descending a fairly steep levee path. Being a fish and wildlife biologist for 25 years in the Central Valley (currently with Ducks Unlimited), Cliff will provide background on the latest research and conservation efforts for certain species, and can provide information on the latest efforts in conservation and science on a variety of ecological topics, so bring your questions! Scopes can be a valuable

asset. Please note that there are no restrooms.

Meet Cliff at the Bridgeway Island Pond, West Sacramento. From downtown Sacramento, take Hwy 50 west, cross over the Sacramento River and exit on Jefferson Blvd. Turn left onto Jefferson and right on Lake Washington Blvd. From Lake Washington Blvd, turn left onto Southport Pkwy. At 2.8 miles, turn right on Oakland Bay Dr, make an immediate right onto Bowen Island St, which turns into Solomon Island Rd, and take a right on Pender Island Rd into the cul-de-sac. Park at the end of the cul-de-sac and on surrounding streets.

Teal Bend Golf Course

Sunday, January 14, 8 a.m.

Expected length: 3-4 hours
Richard Barbieri (916) 761-1124
offleash227@gmail.com

Join Richard in exploring the rich habitat of Teal Bend Golf Course. There are a variety of habitats, including wooded and riparian areas, supporting resident birds, and attracting some winter migrants. Easy walking around the golf course. Bring water and snacks.

Meet at the parking lot at Teal Bend Golf Course. The address is 7200 Garden Highway, Sacramento 95837. From Sacramento, take I-5 north, then when it splits into I-5 and Hwy. 99, take Hwy. 99 north. Take Exit 309 at Elverta Rd and turn left (west). Drive about three miles, then turn left onto Garden Hwy. After about a mile, turn left into the golf course.

Guided Sandhill Crane Tours at Cosumnes River Preserve

Upcoming dates are: December 9 & 23.

Registration is required via eventbrite

<https://www.eventbrite.com/o/cosumnes-river-preserve-10868733267>

Join experienced docents and members of the Save Our Sandhill Cranes advocacy group for a 90-minute guided tour of the Sandhill Cranes at the Cosumnes River Preserve.

This tour will begin at the visitor center, rain or shine, and you will get the opportunity to learn about the features, behavior, and anatomy of Sandhill Cranes. After a short Crane introduction, you will either walk or drive to see the cranes, depending on where they are expected to be roosting that night.

During the tour, there will be a few opportunities to look through a scope that will be provided by the preserve docents. But it is recommended that you bring your own binoculars to view the cranes and a variety of shore birds, ducks, geese, swans, and raptors.

Most Sandhill Cranes in the Pacific Flyway spend their fall and winters with us in California and then spend their spring and summers in Alaska and Canada where they nest. For more information visit: <http://soscranes.org/visit-the-cranes/free-tours/>

Free Swan Tours by CDFW

Pre-registration is required by contacting Genelle Treaster, CDFW North Central Region, at genelle.treaster@wildlife.ca.gov.

The 2023-24 swan tour dates are:

December 2, 9, 16, 30 and January 6

Two tours are offered each day at 9:30 a.m. and at 1 p.m.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is offering free swan tours in Yuba County near Marysville on select Saturdays, November through early January.

Held in partnership with Mathews Rice farming operation, this area boasts one of the largest populations of overwintering tundra swans in the Central Valley as well as abundant geese, ducks, shorebirds and raptors.

These popular, naturalist-led tours last approximately two hours. In caravan fashion, the tours traverse flooded rice fields filled with migratory and resident birds, with periodic stops to watch and learn about the wildlife.

Field Trip Findings

Beginning Birder Walk at William Pond Park, (11/12)

Larry Hickey, co-leader with Rich Howard and Jane Van Kessel, reported:

On a perfect November morning 10 of us enjoyed birding at the William Pond part of the American River Parkway. **Yellow-billed Magpies** and **California Scrub-Jays** were active and very vocal the entire morning. We started out with good views of **Western Bluebirds**, **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, **European Starlings** and a male **Northern Flicker**. On the open water we were pleased to see **Pied-billed Grebes**, **American Coots** and beautiful **Wood Ducks**. We were also surprised to see an increasing number (five) of **Mute Swans**. Highlights were good scope views of a **Great Blue Heron** beginning to acquire breeding plumage, and a close, very cooperative **Red-shouldered Hawk** spotted by one of our beginning birders.

Nimbus Fish Hatchery, (11/11)

Susan Goodrich reported:

15 birders set off on sunny morning with Fish and Wildlife educator Molly Shea to explore the Nimbus Fish hatchery environs, and were immediately rewarded with a beautiful male **American Kestrel** perched on a wire over the American River. **Great Egrets**, **Great Blue Herons**, and **Spotted Sandpipers** dotted the river, as 19 **Double-crested Cormorants** lined the cross-river wire. Two **Black-crowned Night Herons** were spied in the netted area south of the river. Molly shared information about the current salmon run, as salmon ran upstream in the river and swam around the tanks. Molly also offered a treat as she took the group behind the chain-link fence to walk around the two overflow retention ponds south of the river. The reward was a beautiful **Northern Pintail** among the **herons**, **Mallards** and many, many **gulls**. A 2–3 year old **Bald Eagle** soared overhead, showing it knew no boundaries like chain link fences. **Gulls** came and went throughout the morning, and though most were identified as **California Gulls**, the group was able to spy a few **Herring Gulls** and a **Glaucous-winged Gull**. Another treat was a great number of **White-throated Swifts**, circling overhead as the group circled back around towards the bridge. A final lap was taken near the dam, showing more gulls, **Cedar Waxwings**, **Bewick's Wrens**, and a very large kettle of **Turkey Vultures** stewing overhead! Complete lists of the birds seen can be found here. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S154228229>
<https://ebird.org/checklist/S154243475>

Cosumnes River Preserve, (11/7)

Leader Cathie LaZier reported:

The fog lifted and the sun came out just as 16 of us started along the seasonal wetland trail. Several experienced birders carried scopes and spotted birds, assisting the newer birders in finding 10 species of ducks, a few species of shorebirds and hawks, and a variety of small passerines. **Sandhill Cranes** were abundant and we had great scope views"

Traylor Ranch, (11/5)

Mary Forrestal, co-leader with Susan Goodrich, reported:

16 birders set off on a cloudy Sunday morning to see just how many **White-crowned Sparrows** could be squeezed into 88 acres of bird sanctuary. Along the way they saw five different types of woodpeckers

including: **Acorn**, **Nuttall's**, **Downy**, **Northern Flicker**, and two **Red-breasted Sapsuckers!**

Several raptors also put in appearances: **Red-tailed** and **Red-shouldered Hawks**, **American Kestrel**, **Cooper's Hawk**, and a possible **Sharpie (Sharp-shinned Hawk)**. Good looks at a **Purple Finch** were appreciated by all. But the grand prize for many was a **California Thrasher** singing at the top of a tree! Altogether 45 species were seen and the consensus was there were a lot of **White-crowned Sparrows**. You can see the complete eBird list for the trip at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S153847816>.

Bothe-Napa Valley State Park, (11/4)

Leader Dan Williams reported:

Eight of us had a magnificent day in Napa Valley which started at Lake Hennessey Boat Launch, where we were entertained by birds for two hours without hardly leaving the parking lot! The lake itself was teeming with **grebes** (mostly **Westerns** but we were able to pick out a few **Clark's**), many of which still had begging juveniles in tow (too large to ride on their parents' backs, but not above continuing to beg). A **Hairy Woodpecker** bombed into one of the trees at the edge of the parking lot and was cooperative enough to give us some great views in the scope. Walking up the edge of the lake just a short way, we were surprised to hear a couple of **Virginia Rails** calling, and then were even more surprised to have a brief look at a flying **Sora!** A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was a nice treat along the shore, a young **Bonaparte's Gull** put in an appearance flying up and back across the middle of the lake, and then atop a conifer on the far western side of the lake we spotted a distant **Bald Eagle**. As we were getting back to our cars and about to head to our next destination, the eagle lumbered our way giving us a spectacular rather low fly-by. From late morning into early afternoon, we birded the Redwood Trail at Bothe-Napa Valley State Park, meandering up Ritchey Creek Canyon from the picnic area. Quite near the trailhead turned out to be where most of the avian activity was, with a mixed flock containing **Chestnut-backed Chickadees**, **Brown Creepers**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**, and at least one each of **Hutton's Vireo** and **Townsend's Warbler**. Above that spot, the trail got rather quiet with the exception of the occasional **Steller's Jays** and **Band-tailed Pigeons**, until...two gargantuan **Pileated Woodpeckers** came loping into a Doug fir across the creek from us, that was bestrewn with grapevines, and proceeded to work at the grapes, sometimes dangling like parrots! A most entertaining encounter to end the day with. We toasted to the pair at V. Sattui Winery where we had a lovely après-birding wine and cheese.

Bridgeway Island Pond, (10/28)

Maureen Geiger, co-leader with Cliff Feldheim, reported:

Twelve cold, windblow, but undaunted birders enjoyed the Pond and surrounding area seeing almost 60 species of birds on this first cold, fall morning. Cliff Feldheim joined Maureen as a co-leader and shared his vast knowledge of the Pond and its birds from cul-de-sac to levee. Highlights, of course, were the huge numbers of **Blue-winged** and **Cinnamon Teal** plus equally large numbers of **yellowlegs**, **stilts**, and **dowitchers**. Other species included **Western Grebes** on the Channel and **Forster's Tern**, **Say's Phoebe** and an end-of-trip **Sora**.

Auburn State Recreation Area, (10/27)

Leader Craig Swolgaard reported:

Today was a great day! Seven of us started out at 8a.m. and spent over three hours birding over a 4.5 mile hike in Auburn SRA. The morning started out cold but warmed up once the sun got higher. A total of 39 species were recorded. One of the best birds today was a **White-throated Sparrow**, well seen and photographed by all. Others included **Band-tailed Pigeons**, **Purple Finch**, **Green Heron**, and **Steller's Jay**. The hike takes you through oak woodland and grassland, a deep ravine with conifers and a creek, and some riparian/pond habitat. Many of the "winter" species such as **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** and **Cedar Waxwing** were present. Here is a link to our eBird list: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S153179285>.

Napa-Sonoma Marshes, (10/25)

Amy McDonald, co-leader with Nancy Gronert, reported:

For shorebird lovers, the Napa-Sonoma Marshes WA-Huichica Unit was the place to be on October 25th. We scheduled our trip to take advantage of a noon high tide with the expectation that shorebirds from nearby mudflats would crowd onto islands and the Pond 7A levee as the tide rose. We were not disappointed. Great birding began in the parking lot with an **American Kestrel**, **Merlin**, **Northern Harrier**, and juvenile **Cooper's Hawk**, followed by a **Loggerhead Shrike** as we headed out. Several exposed islands in the pond to the east of the main trail were packed with shorebirds, with highlights being two **Snowy Plovers**, a **Pectoral Sandpiper**, and many **Semipalmated Plovers**. Walking through the eucalyptus grove, **Soras** and a **Virginia Rail** were heard calling from the adjacent marsh. As we approached the levee we could hear the noisy cacophony of thousands of shorebirds, and we arrived to find every inch of the levee occupied. It was an incredible sight as shorebirds continued to pour in and clouds of birds rose and then jostled to find places to land. It was a daunting task to estimate total counts for each species. Thanks to all of our trip participants for their enthusiasm and contributions to a great trip. The complete checklist can be found here (photo credit to Susan Goodrich): eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S153067682>

Sailor Bar, (10/24)

Leader Darrell Mohr reported:

Cool clear morning. Ten people ready to go birding. The parking lot had a number of different species of birds including a large flock of **White-Crowned Sparrows**. Then off to the trail that leads to the Fish Hatchery overlook. At that point **Double-crested Cormorants** were perched on the wire that spans the river. Also perched on the wire were **California Gulls**. Then we went back to the trail along the American River. We soon saw **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**, **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, and **Bushtits**. Farther down the river we noted a large number of gulls on a little island; among the group were **California** and **Herring Gulls**. Also flying overhead was a kettle of **Turkey Vultures**. We presumed that they are congregating for the Salmon run. We had a total of 44 species.

Field Trip Findings continued from previous page

Beginning Birder Walk, William Pond Park, (10/22)

Larry Hickey, co-leader with Rich Howard, Nancy Kapellas, and Jane Van Kessel reported: Following a rain shower, which ended just in time, 11 of us enjoyed a beautiful fall morning at the William Pond part of the American River Parkway. A cooperative flock of **Cedar Waxwings** stayed on a eucalyptus tree just across from where we started providing us with excellent scope views. **White-crowned Sparrows** were active the entire morning, singing everywhere, and other recently returned winter residents were found, including large numbers of **American Coots** and a few **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**. Highlights included watching a **Cooper's Hawk** being chased off by a group of **Yellow-billed Magpies**, **Gadwall** on the open water, and excellent scope views of what appeared to be a genuine **Yellow-shafted Northern Flicker**.

Effie Yeaw Nature Center Family Nature Walk, (10/21)

Co-leaders Rich Howard and Lynne Tweten reported: We joined EYNC Naturalist Hannah Steurer to lead a full group (15) on an easy walk under perfect weather conditions. Children ranged in age from about 5 to high schoolers, and the adults were augmented by folks who joined us on the trails. As usual, the first birds observed were **Acorn Woodpeckers**, busy at work storing acorns for the winter. We pointed out the sapsucker holes in various trees and explained their habits, but were not rewarded with a glimpse of the culprits. Soaring **Turkey Vultures** shared the skies with **Red-tailed Hawks** and **Red-shouldered Hawks**. Water birds were scarce due to continuing high, fast water, but we did find **Mallards** and a **Snowy Egret**. On our return we were joined by two **Anna's Hummingbirds** and a **Northern Flicker**. At the end, families expressed their gratitude for all they learned and headed inside the visitor center to see Echo, the resident **Great Horned Owl**.

Reichmuth Park, (10/20)

Leader Eric Johnson reported: Eight intrepid birders ventured into the wilds of this urban oasis. A **Red-shouldered Hawk** greeted us from a wire across the canal, and gave us a nice loud welcoming cry. In the park proper, we got glimpses of a **Black-throated Gray Warbler** and a **Townsend's Warbler**, in addition to the usual (for this time of year) **Yellow-rumped Warblers** and **Northern Flickers**. Three very late (or extremely early?) **Western Tanagers** popped out for a moment, and a merry flock of **Bushtits** scampered through the blackberry bushes, scoffing at the herbicides causing the brown leaves. At the north end of the park, **Western Bluebirds**, **House Finches**, and **American Goldfinches** frolicked in the soccer fields. We found 31 birds, and introduced two first-time visitors to one of the best, most easily birdable spots in Sacramento.

Gibson Ranch, (10/15)

Leader Kevin Thomas reported: It was a wonderful morning for a Sacramento Audubon Society field trip, with seven participants all ready to help each other out so we could see as many species as possible. The morning started crisp and sunny with good looks at **Green Heron** along the water's edge and plenty of **Killdeer** running around along the lawn shoreline. We spotted a **Red-shouldered Hawk** feeding on something across the pond on the ground and were able to see its beautiful feathers glistening in the morning sun. There were flocks of **Red-winged** and **Brewer's Blackbirds** interspersed with **Brown-headed Cowbirds** fluttering around the trees and wires around the park. A row of sprinklers spraying across the lawn provided bath time for dozens of **Cedar Waxwings**, **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, and **Western Bluebirds**. A short time later we found our first of three **Black-throated Gray Warblers** for the morning feeding in a valley oak tree. The lawn area was a feeding ground for **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, **Dark-eyed Juncos**, and a few **Chipping Sparrows** foraging around picking up any invertebrates they could find. Although Black Phoebes are common in the park we were excited to get good looks at a **Say's Phoebe** fly-catching and perching along the boulders that line the road through the park. As the morning wore on the birds became less active but we had a good time looking, listening and chatting about various aspects of bird biology and behavior. A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** prompted a discussion on irruption years in the valley of higher elevation specialists. This fall and winter is shaping up to be a good one for this species. Thanks to those who attended, good birding!

Putah Creek Preserve, (10/14)

Leader Ben Graber reported: The trip went pretty well. We birded Putah Creek, Lake Solano and Monticello Dam. In addition to the usual resident birds, we saw a **Lewis's Woodpecker** and **Wilson's** and **Townsend's Warblers**. We heard a **Sora** and saw lots of **Wood Ducks**. At the dam we heard a **Rock Wren**, but it stayed well hidden.



Abundant birds at Napa-Sonoma Marshes.
Photo: Susan Goodrich

See more field trip sightings photos on page 6

Ducks In Scopes

Cosumnes River Preserve presents "Ducks In Scopes," where preserve docents have a row of scopes set up, some set lower to accommodate children, giving good views of the many colorful ducks and geese, as well as other shorebirds such as **Black-necked Stilts** and **Common Snipe**. A table display features "Duck Soup," dishes of water dipped from the pond full of sand fleas, dragonfly nymphs, and other squiggly things that provide the protein the birds are feeding on. A microscope and hand lens provide close-up looks. The Preserve is a quick drive from Sacramento. The Preserve address is, 13501 Franklin Blvd, Galt, CA 95690. The viewing area is in the first parking lot on your right as you drive into the preserve. 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., on the following dates: Saturday, December 9 & 23, 2023 Saturday, January 13 & 27, 2024 Saturday, February 10, 2024

Upcoming Bird Festivals

Morro Bay Bird Festival January 11–15, 2024

The four-day festival offers field trips, presentations, master classes, and special events. Keynote Speaker: Jennifer Ackerman
<https://morrobaybirdfestival.org/>

Snow Goose Festival of the Pacific Flyway, Chico January 25–28, 2024

The 2024 festival offers field trips, a banquet with Keynote Speakers Bryce and Brita Lundberg, workshops, youth activities, and art exhibit. Registration begins in early December. Contact: info@snowgoosefestival.org, 530-592-9092

Galt Winter Bird Festival Saturday, February 3, 2024

Events include bird tours, bird photography exhibit, free children's activities, live wild animal presentation, youth art contest, and more. Keynote speakers Kate Rutter and Michelle Dodge.
<https://www.cityofgalt.org/our-city/special-events/winter-bird-festival>

Save the Date Point Reyes Birding & Nature Festival April 19–21, 2024

Point Reyes National Seashore provides the main backdrop for the festival, where the Pacific Flyway, Pacific Ocean, and other influences provide an ideal location for birding and wildlife viewing. Registration begins in late February.
<https://www.pointreyesbirdingfestival.org/>

Field Trip Sightings



Green Winged Teal at Cosumnes.
Photo by Dana J. Miller-Blair



Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs at Bridgeway.
Photo by Mary Forrestal



American Pipit at Cosumnes.
Photo by Dana J. Miller-Blair



Cinnamon Teal at Bridgeway.
Photo by Mary Forrestal



Merlin at Sonoma Marshes.
Photo by Susan Goodrich



Sandhill Crane at Cosumnes.
Photo by Dana J. Miller-Blair

Seasonal Sightings October 1 – 31

The excitement and possibility of September gives way to somewhat milder expectations for October. That said, October is still one of the most pleasant times to be in the field and there is plenty of opportunity to turn up interesting birds. It offers an interesting mix of lingering summer residents while nearly all the typical wintering birds have arrived. It won't be until November when large numbers of wintering waterfowl and raptors settle in, but representatives of most of the expected species do turn up by month's end. **Band-tailed Pigeons** were reported sporadically on the flats of the Valley. On 10/15, a **Greater Roadrunner** was seen along Hwy 16 between Rumsey and Guinda in the Capay Valley. This species is increasingly hard to find in our area, where grasslands, rolling hills, and chaparral in the low foothills are filling up with vineyards, orchards, and houses. **Common Poorwills** have also been harder to find, so one along Latrobe Rd adjacent to Deer Creek Hills on 10/14 was a nice surprise.

Shorebirds were relatively low-key for a month that often holds a surprise or two. A late **Baird's Sandpiper** continued from 10/11-10/17 at the Sacramento Regional WTP, while **Pectoral Sandpipers** were reported at several regular locations including Cosumnes River Preserve, Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, the Davis Wetlands, and the Woodland WTP. The most surprising find among the Charadriiformes came on 10/27 when two **Heermann's Gulls** were among a small flock of **California Gulls** at the Sacramento County Bufferlands. The birds continued for a few hours, and a handful of people were able to see them, but they flew away in the late afternoon and were not refound. This is a first county record and one of very few records for the Central Valley.

Blue-headed Vireos are extremely rare in California, so the second for our area this fall was a big surprise when it was found and photographed on 10/1 near Fishing Access #2 on both the Yolo and Solano sides of Putah Creek

upstream of Winters. So far this fall is shaping up to have a decent if not huge invasion of some montane/northern species, with lowland **Steller's Jays**, decent numbers of **Golden-crowned Kinglets** and **Varied Thrushes**, and good numbers of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** and **Pine Siskins**. On 10/24, a **Winter Wren** was found at the same site where it spent last winter near Lake Solano. Another was found upstream near the Hwy 128 Putah Creek bridge on 10/30. It is odd that this species is turning up more than ever, while the expected **Pacific Wren** is found less frequently than it was a decade or two ago. An **Evening Grosbeak** was a nice find at Sacramento Bar along the American River Parkway on 10/3. An **Orchard Oriole** was found at the UC Davis Arboretum on 10/11, and it continued into November. It can be challenging to separate this species from the much more common, larger and lankier **Hooded Oriole**, but this bird was seen and photographed by many observers. Warbler migration tapered off by mid-month, and no unexpected warblers were found this October.

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 is roughly defined as lying 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: Max Brodie, Lyann Comrack, Konshau Duman, Gil Ewing, Joshua Greenfield, David Hamilton, Denise Hamilton, Cliff Hawley, Jeri Langham, Andrew Lee, Mark Martucci, Ethan Monk, Gerrit Platenkamp, Zane Pickus, Steve Scott, Kim Tenggardjaja, Kevin Thomas, John Trochet, Bart Wickel, and Lynette Williams. Thanks to everyone for their reports—without them, this column would not be possible.

—Chris Conard

SAS New Members

Please welcome these new members:

Beverly Berkley
Yolanda Cu
Lynne Goldsmith
Brian Hake
Margaret Shires
Michael Wertheim
Andrea Willey

Thank You For Your Generous Donations!

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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:



- 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, January 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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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.

The Observer is published by the Sacramento Audubon Society, monthly, January through December.

There isn't a monthly speaker program in December, but you can attend November's meeting online via or Zoom or in person at Effie Yeaw Nature Center. Join the Sacramento Audubon Society Board and other members at Effie Yeaw at 7 p.m. on Thursday, November 30 for **Monarch Butterflies - A Conservation Opportunity for Native Species** presented by Melissa Burns.

