

The Observer

Sacramento Audubon Society

February General Meeting

Thursday, February 15, 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>.

South America: Diversity and Rare Birds

Presented by John Sterling

John will take you on a virtual tour of the diverse landscapes, habitats, and birds (and mammals) of this amazing continent. From the Caribbean coast to the south tip of Tierra del Fuego, John will talk about many of the rarest birds that he encountered along with their conservation concerns, illustrating the presentation with photographs of these amazing species.

John has been a hard core birder in California since he was shown a Pileated Woodpecker in 5th grade camp in 1971. He is a professional ornithologist and has worked for the Smithsonian Institution, US Forest Service research stations, HT Harvey & Associates, Arizona and Oregon state universities among other organizations since 1981. John has traveled extensively throughout California learning about local bird distribution and is an authority on that state's avifauna. In 2015 he set and still holds California's big year record with 506 species and has many big day records as well. He

has traveled internationally as a guide and ornithologist for many institutions including projects as a Smithsonian ornithologist to Mexico, Ecuador, Peru, The Philippines, Sumatra, Canada and Russia. John currently has his own company, Sterling Wildlife Biology, specializing in international

tours, birding classes, research and environmental consulting for The Nature Conservancy, the Kern Water Bank, the California Rice Commission, the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, National Audubon's International Alliance Program, CA Dept. of Water Resources among other organizations.



Red-ruffed Fruitcrow

Safety While Birding

We wanted to reach out to our members regarding safety considerations while birding. A recent incident at Cosumnes River Preserve concerning a daytime robbery in the parking lot has prompted this outreach. Three teens confronted and took camera equipment from a gentleman still in the parking lot but heading to the boardwalk.

While this appears to be a rare occurrence there are numerous stories from across the country about photographers being robbed. We did not find many stories of binocular or scope robberies, but it's not unreasonable to assume these could be targeted as well. So we researched best recommendations and also reached out to the Sacramento Sheriff's office. Here is a rundown on things to prepare for and consider:

- Consider going birding with others. There is always better safety with more people present.
- If you feel your life is being threatened call 911.
- It is important to visualize what you would do in any emergency, as it prevents panic. Knowing what to do if you are robbed reduces the risk of you being hurt.
- If someone tries to rob you, don't try to defend your property. It's just a camera, binocular or scope and, hopefully, insured. Your safety is paramount.

- The robber's adrenaline levels will be through the roof, and they will be as nervous as you. Stay calm. Move slowly and steadily and follow their directions. Give them only what they want and explain why you are making the movements, e.g., "I am going to release the clip on this strap so I can hand it over."
- It is in your interest, and the robbers, for the experience to be over as quickly as possible. So, follow their instructions to the letter, and don't offer anything extra or help. If they demand twenty dollars, give them that, not fifty. If they want your camera, don't hand them your wallet too.
- Be observant. Take notes in your head of their appearance. Whom do they look like? What's their height and build? How old are they? What color eyes and hair do they have? Are there any distinguishing features? If there is more than one robber, do they use names? Do they appear drunk or high? If they use a weapon, what does that look like?
- Once they have what they want, offer to walk away. Go immediately to somewhere safe, where there are many people, and report the crime. Ask someone to stay with you while you report it.

Most of these recommendations are common sense. We should all be mindful of our safety, and that of others whenever we are in a public setting. The more aware you are, the safer you will be.

—Sacramento Audubon Society

Field Trips February 1 — March 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.
- 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.

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>

Bodega Bay

Saturday, February 3, 7 a.m.

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

Join Dan for a full day of birding in a variety of coastal habitats. Plan to see waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, and raptors. Rain or shine. Very little hiking. Bring a lunch, water, and binoculars (scope if you have one), and \$7 for a parking fee.

Meet Dan at the Park & Ride off I-80 in West Sacramento. From Sacramento, take the West Capitol Ave. Exit #81; turn left at the light and then left again into the Park & Ride lot.

Robinson Road, Solano County

Sunday, February 4, 8 a.m.

Expected length: 4-5 hours
Maureen Geiger, (916) 281-6652
mkgeiger@comcast.net

This is one of the best areas in the Valley for wintering raptors and can include Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks, Prairie Falcons, and both Bald and Golden Eagles. More reliably found are Northern Harriers, White-tailed Kites, and Red-tailed Hawks. We will check the fields for Horned Larks, Long-billed Curlews and American Pipits although numbers vary year to year. Mountain Plovers have been found in the past but are harder and harder to find. Other species include Say's Phoebes, Western Bluebirds, and Savannah Sparrows. Mountain Bluebirds are possible.

FRS radios and spotting scopes are useful on this trip. Because some of the route involves pullouts on a busy highway, we should try to minimize the number of vehicles driven. Participants are encouraged to arrange their own carpools at the meeting site. Meet at the Mace Blvd Park and Ride. From Sacramento, take I-80 west towards Davis to Mace Blvd, Exit #75, then right/north, right again at the signal, pass Ikeda's Market, and right again into the parking lot at the big, round water tank. This trip will end by early afternoon.

Napa-Sonoma Marshes WA —Huichica Creek Unit

Thursday, February 8, 9 a.m.

Expected length: 3
Leaders: Amy McDonald and Nancy Gronert (279) 346-4790
sacauduboncorsec@gmail.com

Join us for a morning of birding the

Huichica Creek Unit of the Napa-Sonoma Marshes. We'll bird the containment ponds, adjacent riparian areas, and the levees at the end of the main trail as we look for wading birds, shorebirds, waterfowl, gulls, terns, and more. This is an easy walk of approximately 1.5 miles on flat, dirt trails. A porta potty is available near the parking lot.

Additional details and printable map available at: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Lands/Places-to-Visit/Napa-Sonoma-Marshes-WA>

Meet Nancy and Amy at the parking lot of Huichica Creek unit of Napa-Sonoma Marshes at the end of Buchli Station Rd. From I-80 take exit 39B to Hwy 12W. At the intersection with Hwy 121, turn left onto Sonoma Hwy (Hwy 12/121). Turn left on Duhig Rd and in approximately 2 miles turn left on Los Amigos Rd. Turn right (south) at Buchli Station Rd and continue through the vineyards until you cross the railroad tracks and enter the parking lot.

Cosumnes River Preserve

Saturday, February 10, 2 p.m.

Expected length: 3 hours
Leader: Paul Miller (916) 768-7503
paul@pjmilller.com

Maximum number of participants: 6
Registration is required for this trip. Please email Paul to register.

Cosumnes River Preserve is a wonderful venue for those with disability challenges. Within a few hundred feet of the main parking lot there is a wooden, easily accessible viewing platform. The flooded fields attract a wide range of dabbling ducks. Greater White-fronted Geese, Sandhill Cranes, Dowitchers, Wilson's Snipe, and yellowlegs should be present. There are always some passerines and raptors.

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

Beginning Birder Walk, William Pond Park

Sunday, February 11

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.

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. Registrants will be emailed the meeting time and exact location.

William Pond Park

Wednesday, February 14, 7:30 a.m.

Expected length: 2-4 hours
Leader: Mark Martucci
matuchbirdman@yahoo.com
Maximum number of participants: 8
Registration is required for this trip. Please email Mark to register.

Join Mark for a morning walk at William Pond Park looking for resident and wintering birds. Mergansers and goldeneye may be swimming in the backwaters while wrens and towhees call from the shrubs. California Quail, Western Bluebirds, and Lark Sparrows may also be present in the park area. Bring snacks and liquids if desired. The trip will end before noon. A Sac County Park Pass or \$7 entry fee is required for all vehicles.

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

Sacramento Delta River Cruise

Saturday, February 17, 8:30 a.m.

Expected length: 7-8 hours
Leaders: Sonja Sorbo (916) 390-8463
ssgasdoc@yahoo.com
Maureen Geiger (916) 281-6652
mkgeiger@comcast.net
Maximum number of participants: 26

This trip is full. Registration is closed for this trip.

Great Backyard Bird Count for Kids

Saturday, February 17,

9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Folsom Powerhouse SHP
(9980 Greenback Ln, Folsom, CA)

Sunday, February 18,

9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Effie Yeaw Nature Center
(2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael, CA)
Sacramento Audubon Society is partnering with State Parks and Effie Yeaw to host a Great Backyard Bird Count for Kids on February 17th and 18th. The Great Backyard Bird Count is an opportunity for people all over the world to contribute to our scientific understanding of bird populations by recording the birds found in your neighborhood.

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Registration is required and is open to children 7 years and older. (Children must be accompanied by an adult for the entire count.) To register or for more information, go to <https://www.sacramentoaudubon.org/gbbc-for-kids>.

Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge

Sunday, February 18, 8 a.m.
Expected length: All Day
Leader: Cliff Feldheim, (916) 217-2920
sacaudubonconservation@gmail.com
Cliff will be looking for the enormous flocks of ducks, geese, and swans that winter in the Valley or stop to feed on their way north. This is also a good place for raptors, and Bald Eagles and Peregrine Falcons 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. Being a fish and wildlife biologist for 25 years in the Central Valley (currently with Ducks Unlimited and a past employee of Sacramento NWR), Cliff will also provide some history of the refuge and its habitats and provide information on the latest waterfowl research and conservation efforts in the Central Valley.

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 for a year.

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.

Gray Lodge

Saturday, February 24th, 10 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 for this trip.

This is a fully accessible trip including accessible restrooms and trails. We will have the opportunity to see a vast quantity and variety of wintering migrant water birds. The beautiful Snow Geese will be the most abundant bird we will see. Hawks and possibly Bald Eagles will be present as well. Directions, fees, and meeting location will be provided upon registration.

Ancil Hoffman Park

Sunday, February 25, 7:30 a.m.
Expected length: 3-4 hours
Leaders: Rich Howard (916) 203-0952 and Dana Miller-Blair (916) 947-9397
RHowardA@gmail.com
djmlair@gmail.com

A leisurely walk along the American River should turn up many of our resident and winter visiting oak woodland and river birds. This trip is suitable for bird lovers of all levels. We will have at least one scope for closer views of more stationary birds. Walking in the riparian area is fairly level on an unpaved trail or grass; a paved trail is available further from the river.

Meet Rich and Dana in the last parking area on Tarshes Dr just before the golf course clubhouse.

From California Ave in Fair Oaks, take the Tarshes Dr entrance and follow it all the way to the last parking lot on your left. A SAC County Park Pass, or \$7 entry fee is required for all vehicles. Email Rich if further directions are required.

Mather Lake Regional Park

Wednesday, February 28, 8 a.m.
Expected length: 2-3 hours
Leaders: Susan Goodrich(916) 201-6871, Jane Van Kessel
sacramentoaudubonfieldtrips@gmail.com

Join Susan and Jane at one of our most popular birding locations to look for a nice variety of resident and migrant birds, including raptors, water birds and small passerines. Possibilities include White-tailed Kites, California Quail, Pied-billed Grebe, and the occasional Green Heron and American Bittern. This is a great trip for beginners and more experienced birders. A \$7 per car entrance fee is required; your Sac County Parkway pass is valid here. Bathrooms are available on site. Heavy rain cancels the trip.

Meet in the parking lot of Mather Regional Park, 4111 Old Eagle's Nest Rd, Mather, CA. From Highway 50 E, take Exit 17 at Zinfandel Dr. Go south about 2.5 miles. After crossing Douglas Blvd take the first left into the park area.

Coyote Pond Park and University Pond, Lincoln

Saturday, March 2, 8 a.m.
Expected length: 3 hours
Leaders: Nancy Gronert (279) 346-4790 and Amy Mcdonald
sacaudubonconsec@gmail.com

Join us for a morning of birding in Lincoln exploring Coyote Pond Park and nearby University Pond. We'll start at Coyote Pond which includes open grasslands, ponds, and riparian habitat. We can expect to see wintering and resident waterfowl as well as a good variety of raptors, woodpeckers,

sparrows, and other grassland birds. We will then make a five-minute drive to University Pond on the William Jessup University Campus, where we'll scan the pond for a variety of waterfowl, gulls, and shorebirds.

The two locations are both easy walks, totaling approximately 2 miles on mostly flat, paved trails. At Coyote Pond there are gradual slopes near the meeting spot and on the path to Whistler Pond. A spotting scope is helpful, but not required at University Pond. Your leaders will also have scopes for you to use. There are no bathroom facilities at either location. Bathrooms are available at the Chevron station on the corner of Twelve Bridges Rd and E Joyner Pkwy on the way to Coyote Pond.

Meet Amy and Nancy at Coyote Pond Park: Park on Old Kenmare Dr, adjacent to the trailhead at the corner of Old Kenmare Rd and Eastridge Dr (Note: this is not the main park entrance.) From N CA-65 in Lincoln, take exit 313 onto Twelve Bridges Dr. Head east on Twelve Bridges Dr. for approx. 1.5 miles and then turn right on Eastridge Dr. Stay on Eastridge Dr for .5 miles and then turn left on Old Kenmare Rd. The trailhead is on your right, park along Kenmare Rd.

For the stop at University Pond: Park on Larkspur Dr near the corner of Larkspur Dr and University Ave. Travel NE on Eastridge Dr for .5 miles back to Twelve Bridges Dr. Turn left on Twelve Bridges Dr and in .75 miles turn left on E Joyner Pkwy. Stay on E Joyner Pkwy for 1 mile and then turn left on W Ranch View Dr. In 500 ft turn left on University Ave. In 1 mile, turn left on Larkspur Dr and park on the street.

Bobelaine Audubon Sanctuary

Sunday, March 3, 8:30 a.m.
Expected length: 3 hours
Leader: Maureen Geiger, (916) 281-6652
mkgeiger@comcast.net

Join Maureen for an approximately 2.5 mile walk in this 430-acre National Audubon Sanctuary managed by Sacramento Audubon. We will walk to the rivers' overlook where the Bear River flows into the Feather River looking for resident and wintering birds such as Hermit Thrush, Fox Sparrow, crowned sparrows, both towhees and various raptors along the way. Come and hear about the efforts underway to attract butterflies including Monarchs to the Preserve. This trip will end by noon. The trails are fairly level, however, to access them you must be able to walk up and down a moderately steep levee trail both coming and going.

Meet Maureen at the Bobelaine

Audubon Sanctuary. From Sacramento, take I-5 north, then Hwy 99 north toward Yuba City; about 2 miles north of the new bridge over the Feather River, turn right on Laurel Ave and continue to the Bobelaine parking lot at the end.

Lake Solano County Park

Wednesday, March 6, 8 a.m.
Expected length: 4-5 hours
Leader: Bill Bianco, (916) 889-4849
biancowm@yahoo.com

Join Bill for an easy walk through low foothills looking for a variety of woodpeckers, warblers, late wintering species and other songbirds. Walk 1 – 1.5 miles on fairly flat terrain. May want to bring a lunch and water. Heavy rain and strong wind cancels. A \$6 Park Fee is required. No dogs and no glass containers allowed in the park area. Meet Bill at the Lake Solano County Park parking lot. From Sacramento on I-80 west, take Exit 70 for CA-113 north toward Woodland. Take Exit 70 for West Covell Blvd. Turn left on West Covell Blvd/ Road 31. In 7 miles, take a slight left on to Rd 93A. At the traffic circle, continue straight to stay on CA-128/E Grant Ave. Continue to follow CA-128 west. In 4.3 miles, turn left on Pleasants Valley Rd. In 0.2 miles, turn left into the park. 8685 Pleasants Valley Rd., Winters, CA.

Hidden Falls Regional Park

Thursday, March 7, 8 a.m.
Expected length: 5 hours
Leader: Peter Perrine, (916) 661-8787
pmperrine2@gmail.com
Registration is required for this trip and is limited to 8 participants. Please email Peter to register.

Hidden Falls Regional Park is a beautiful example of the Sierra Nevada foothills in the transition zone between oak woodlands and grey pines. An eBird hotspot, with more than 115 bird species found here (so far), it is a very popular destination not only for wildlife, but also for its scenic beauty and waterfalls. Expect to see a good variety of oak woodland and riparian birds, with early nesters beginning to display, and the usual wintering birds still in good numbers. This will be a somewhat strenuous trip of about five miles to the main falls and back. The first mile from the trailhead descends about 300 feet to a small stream, which means a one mile climb at the end of the day. Not steep, but trails here can be slippery after a rain. Bring water and snacks, or lunch if you wish; there are picnic tables and a restroom near the parking lot.

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

Field Trips February 1 — March 15, 2024 continued

Golden Gate Park and Sutro Baths

Saturday, March 9, 7 a.m.

Expected length: 10 hours

Leader: Dan Williams, (714) 943-1266

jaegermaestro@yahoo.com

Registration is required for this trip and is limited to 12 participants. Please email Dan to register.

Join Dan for a full day birding the City by the Bay! We will start at Golden Gate Park's Stow Lake and bird the Log Cabin Trail to the Japanese Tea Garden. Birds we will hope to see include Allen's Hummingbird, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Pacific Wren, and Townsend's Warbler, as well as all manner of waterfowl and gulls on the lake. After a picnic lunch in the park, we will head on to Lands End and bird the Sutro Baths area where we will hope to spot rock-loving shorebirds such as Black Oystercatcher, Black and Ruddy Turnstone, and Surfbirds as well as any sea ducks, loons, and auks we can find. If time allows (and/or rare bird reports indicate) there will be an optional afternoon stop at the Presidio/Crissy Field before heading over the Golden Gate Bridge for home. Bring a lunch and plenty of water and expect a full day of birding!

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

Woodland Wastewater Treatment Plant, Yolo County

Sunday, March 10, 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 Rd on the right. Turn left onto Road 24 and continue to the gravel parking area near the north pond.

Bobelaine Trail Closure Notice

The Otter Trail is currently closed to visitors due to a fallen tree. Please check the website <https://www.sacramentoaudubon.org/bobelaine-audubon-sanctuary> for further updates.



Field Trip Findings

Bridgeway Island Pond, (1/13)

Leader Cliff Feldheim reported: Three people showed up but it was raining and once the lightning and thunder started, I decided we should cancel the trip. There were very few birds around with the storm.

Sacramento Bar, (1/11)

Leader Darrell Mohr reported: At the start of a sunny day, although very cold, eight ladies and myself braved the morning. We started seeing birds in the parking lot, including a **Phainopepla**. A **Sharp-shinned Hawk** was spotted in a cottonwood tree. A debate started to make sure we had correctly identified the hawk. From the parking lot we walked to the trail along the American River. An assortment of birds were flying about, **Oak Titmice**, **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, **Bushtits** and other small passerines. Farther along the trail **Turkey Vultures** were perched in trees waiting for the warm air. Out on the river were **Common Goldeneye**, **Bufflehead**, and **Common Mergansers**. A highlight for most was a good look at a **Red-breasted Sapsucker**. After we returned to the parking lot and tallied our bird count we had a total of 56 species. It was a good day.

Woodland WWTP, (1/9)

Leader Mark Martucci reported: Nine people braved the cold the wind and light rain to detect 51 species of birds. Highlights included **Blue-winged Teal**, **Canvasback**, **Redhead**, **Lesser Scaup**, **American Avocet**, **Black-bellied Plover**, **Long-billed Curlew**, **Merlin**, and **Burrowing Owl**.

Brannan Island, (12/28)

Leader Dan Williams reported: Twelve of us had a fantastic morning of birding at Brannan Island State Rec Area; a trip this chapter was trying for the first time and will certainly be running again! We started by slowly working the Willow Campground, and had a bit of a slow start, with a few **Western Bluebirds**, **Nuttall's Woodpeckers**, **Dark-eyed Juncos**, and **White-crowned** and **Golden-crowned Sparrows** getting us going. Across Threemile Slough, we could see and hear distant flocks of **Sandhill Cranes** over Twitchell Island. When we moved over to the Delta Vista Berthing Area, things started to pick up. A very close **Great Blue Heron**, a very close **Double-crested Cormorant**, and an obliging **Belted Kingfisher** provided astounding views in the scope, while a **Say's Phoebe** put in an appearance on the lawn. As we were just about to get back in our cars and move to the next parking lot, we heard the off-key strained tones of a **Varied Thrush** and spotted it at the top of a eucalyptus tree where we were able to enjoy rare scope views of that species. From the Sportfishing Lot, we moseyed our way north along the slough toward Twitchell Island Road. Along the way we were treated to views of a **Great Egret** rookery across the slough. After crummy views of them diving away into the underbrush, a **Spotted Towhee** finally sat up high and proud and was giving us good views when a male **Common Yellowthroat** flew over from the edge of the slough and did the same. It was cool to see those two species in one field of view! A little further up the slough we spotted two **Green Herons** standing on some flattened reeds, and then a little further still, a **Sora** emerged from the reeds and gave us a rare few minutes in view. On our walk back, good looks were had at multiple **Red-shouldered** and **Red-tailed Hawks** as well as a **White-tailed Kite**. Then several **American Crows** harassed and chased a **Great Horned Owl** out of one of the groves of eucalyptus trees. All told, we had 62 species and a very enjoyable half-day trip that we will most definitely be replicating in the future!

Staten Island, (12/22)

Leader Bill Beckett reported: Five participants joined me for a Sandhill Crane fly in from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Highlights of the trip included **California Quail**, thousands of **Aleutian Cackling Geese**, **Sandhill Cranes**, a **Great Horned Owl**, and a **Coyote** eating a goose. The spectacle of watching hundreds of cranes and thousands of geese flying into the island as the sun was setting was nothing short of amazing.

Effie Yeaw Family Walk, (12/16)

Leader Lynne Tweeten, assisted by EYNC docent Jennifer Kerr, reported: Seventeen of us, a mix of enthusiastic children and adults, enjoyed a clear, brisk morning at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. We had a lovely birding walk that included sightings of the usual suspects: noisy and active **Acorn Woodpeckers** and **European Starlings** high up in the oak trees. **Oak Titmouse**, and **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** flitted and foraged around us on our walk. **Soaring Turkey Vultures** shared the skies with a **Red-tailed Hawk**. Water birds were somewhat scarce but we did find **Mallards**, a **Great Egret**, **Great Blue Heron**, and **Bufflehead**. A majestic deer with sublime antlers sat for us while we admired him and a **Northern Flicker** waved us goodbye on our walk back.

Bridgeway Island Pond, (12/16)

Leader Cliff Feldheim reported: Despite a chilly morning, we had a nice walk along the Bridgeway Pond up to the Shipping Channel levee. Although we weren't trying to maximize our species count and we missed many expected species, we ended up with 38 including looks at the continuing female **Hooded Merganser**. As the morning progressed, we were provided with great light and close looks at drake and hen **Cinnamon** and **Blue-winged Teal** and an opportunity to compare the hens of each species. We enjoyed watching the **Forster's Terns** and **Bonaparte's Gulls** foraging in the pond, and the sheer number of **Cinnamon Teal**, 257 on an early morning count!



Cinnamon Teal. Photo by MaryForrestal

Great Backyard Bird Count for Kids

Looking for a way to encourage the young birders in your life to get outside and observe birds? Sacramento Audubon Society is partnering with State Parks and Effie Yeaw to host a Great Backyard Bird Count for Kids on February 17th and 18th. The Great Backyard Bird Count is an opportunity for people all over the world to contribute to our scientific understanding of bird populations by recording the birds found in your neighborhood.

Registration is required. To register, visit: <https://www.sacramentoaudubon.org/gbbc-for-kids-registration>.

Dates and locations:

Saturday, February 17 at Folsom Powerhouse SHP, 9980 Greenback Ln, Folsom, CA

Sunday, February 18 at Effie Yeaw Nature Center 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael, CA

Time: 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Volunteers are asked to arrive at 8:30 a.m.

Ages: 7+ (children must be accompanied by an adult the whole count)

Please bring: Your kids or borrow someone else's, warm layers in case of chilly weather or rain, sturdy shoes, binoculars if you have them (or borrow some from us), a bagged lunch, and your observational skills for spotting birds!

What to Expect: Start the count day by borrowing a pair of binoculars and learning how to use them during a binocular boot camp. We will then have a quick chat about why it's important to count birds, before splitting into small groups and exploring along the trail. Adults are expected to bird alongside their kids and each group will have an experienced bird leader to help identify what we find. After counting, we will gather back together for lunch and short presentations from each group to share their findings.

Young birders over the age of 7 and their beginner or experienced level adults are all welcome to join. Parking at the Folsom Powerhouse SHP is \$10 for the day or covered with an annual State Parks pass. Parking at Effie Yeaw is \$7 per car, payable at the entrance. Both locations have easily accessible options for flat, paved trails, as well as ADA parking. Please let us know of any accessibility requirements when you register.

Interested in volunteering? Email Nicole at NicoleMBarden@gmail.com

For more information about the GBBC and other ways to participate, visit www.birdcount.org/.

Bringing Butterflies to the Bobelaine Preserve

I am thinking about the synchronicity of events. In this instance, when two Zoom presentations happened to focus on Monarchs and Milkweeds within a couple days of each other, the first at a meeting of the Sacramento Audubon Society (SAS), the second by the Yolo Basin Foundation.

This is not my first run-in with Monarchs. Everyone these days knows they are severely threatened and need a great deal of help to survive. And I have wondered what I could do to help with this, but in a desultory way, with no real commitment or follow-through.

The Zooms changed that and maybe it was just the right time, but suddenly, I found so many reasons to learn about and find ways of supporting Monarchs and Milkweeds. I would like to see both at Bobelaine, the wonderful 430 acre Preserve SAS manages on the Feather River north of Sacramento. If Bobelaine could be listed as one of the Western Monarch Trail sites along with our sister organization, Effie Yeaw Nature Center, this would be an additional way of promoting and educating about these beautiful creatures as well as Bobelaine.

The first step in this process is to ensure there are native pollinator plants at Bobelaine in the spring, summer and fall. Secondly, once this is accomplished and nectar is available for the Monarchs spring and fall, the correct type of milkweeds must be available for egg laying. Currently, there are several stands of Showy Milkweed within the Preserve, but they are neither blooming nor being pollinated and thus are not useful to butterflies, although they are increasing in size by underground rhizomes.

Toward this end, with the help of five stalwart volunteers at Bobelaine, a plot about 20' x 16' has been cleared, seeded with native plant seeds, and covered with soil and straw for the winter. The Sacramento Chapter of the California Native Plant Society (SacCNPS) rose to the occasion with very little notice and within about two days, generously provided seeds for almost 15 native plant species.

This will be the first in a series of articles regarding the progress of attracting butterflies and other likely endangered insects to the wonderful Bobelaine Preserve on the Feather River.

—Maureen Geiger



Bill Bianco, Fred Turner, John Williams, Larry Bergkamp, and Kelly Walsh.

Photo by Maureen Geiger

Field Activities Committee Year-End Review

As 2023 came to a close and 2024 began, your SAS Field Activities Committee found ourselves, like many folks, reviewing the past and planning for the future. Our mission has always been to arrange field trips as educational and recreational activities for SAS members and the community, and we were hard at work in 2023. We've attempted to increase our field trips and locales while addressing the pleasure and safety of our attendees. We lost a few long-time leaders, but were able to add quite a few new leaders whose trips we look forward to. We attempted to keep certain tried-and-true-locales in our trip repertoire, while adding some different areas to bird. And we continued to work on in-house operations to make processes smoother.

Running numbers for an 11 month period (1/15-12/15/23), we arranged 113 field trips last year, and only 6 were cancelled. So, with 107 field trips completed, we averaged 9.7 trips per month! Additionally, 9 Beginning Birder trips and 9 Family Friendly trips at Effie Yeaw Nature Center were provided by the Beginning Birder and Effie Yeaw groups.

Attendance figures for those 11 months show 983 attendees enjoyed our trips, or about 90 folks per month, for an average of 9 people per trip!

A big thanks to our hard-working volunteer Field Activities Committee Members, including Richard Barbieri, Sue Darst, Mary Forrestal, Maureen Geiger, Ben Graber, Nancy Gronert, Rich Howard, and Sonja Sorbo. And a big thanks also to all of our excellent volunteer field trip leaders!

As we schedule for 2024, we'll continue to work hard to provide a number of varied trips so we all may enjoy the great birding opportunities our area has to offer. With that in mind, we welcome your feedback. Are there trips you're interested in, places you'd like to go? Please email sacramentoaudubonfieldtrips@gmail.com with any suggestions. Keep in mind we are an all-volunteer organization, so we may be limited by various factors, but we'll do our best to continue to provide a variety of trips for your birding pleasure!

—Susan Goodrich, Chair, Field Activities Committee

Save the Date for Effie Yeaw's Bird and Breakfast March 16 & 24

This annual event, held at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center in Ancil Hoffman Park in Carmichael, starts with bird walks guided by some of the best local birders. For weeks in advance, volunteers scout the Nature Study Area for nests and local rarities. After the walk, join fellow birders for wonderful food and hot coffee to help raise money for the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. No extensive birding experience is necessary—this event caters to all levels.

Bird and Breakfast often sells out. Reservations are required. For more information visit

<https://www.sacnaturecenter.net/events/bird-breakfast-weekend/>.



Photo: Effie Yeaw Nature Center

What Birding Means to Me

I enjoy birding by first saying I love all nature and animals, and my spiritual beliefs, my center, and my comfort come directly from nature and animals.

That being said, my first birding outing with Sacramento Audubon was in December 2015, with Deb Weston as a leader. I will never forget that morning, as it gave me such an overwhelming inner peace. I joined a couple of other SAS birding outings after that, but then my scoliosis and bad knees got in the way. After three surgeries I'm still recovering, but I find solace with my backyard birds. I love to see our resident flycatcher zip around, and I've been watching the crows and Cedar Waxwings enjoy what's left of the persimmons.

I garden for the birds, and the bees, and every spring I look forward to the return of the goldfinches. They dine on the leaves of the sunflowers I plant, and they also enjoy the seeds from my cosmos flowers. They even eat from my zinnias. I've learned to recognize all the different, distinctive "voices" of the goldfinches, and like the other sights and sounds of nature, they connect me to the wondrous mystery of existence. So, too, does the sound of the "hoot" owls in our next door neighbor's massive redwood tree! It's a deep thrill to hear them on a cold, dark winter morning, and, as with my backyard birds, they are balm to my soul. Spending time in nature, with birds and other wildlife, is the best therapy I know.

—Alison Rood

Seasonal Sightings December 1 – 31

Not surprising for a month featuring several of our local Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs), this December produced a lot of interesting birds. There weren't many reports of unusual waterfowl, but up to three **Red-breasted Mergansers** were found throughout the month on Folsom Lake, both from Beals Pt and Folsom Pt, with two recorded on the 12/31 Folsom CBC. One of the best and most accommodating finds was a **Red-necked Grebe** seen and photographed by many from 12/2-12/15 at North Natomas Regional Park—the same site that hosted the **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** earlier in the year. A most unexpected report was of a well-seen, small gray swift on the Folsom CBC by an experienced observer as either a **Chimney** or **Vaux's Swift**. **Vaux's Swifts** have been reported from Marin County this season, but are exceedingly rare farther inland in winter.

Mountain Plovers continued in the fields along Hwy 45 in Yolo County, just south of the Colusa County line; a high of 122 was reported. The old hotspot south of Dixon along Flannery Rd produced up to six birds on 12/10. These are the only two sites where this species was reported in the entire Central Valley, with the only other sites in the state being Carrizo Plain and just south of the Salton Sea. **Marbled Godwits** were unusually persistent in small numbers in Yolo County this month, with up to eight at the Yolo Bypass. On the 12/23 Sacramento CBC, an adult and a first-cycle **Lesser Black-backed Gull** were found at the Yolo County Landfill. There were up to three **Least Bitterns** reported at the Davis Wetlands during the first half of the month.

A **Tropical Kingbird** was photographed at Natomas Regional Park on 12/6, and the first Placer County record of the species was found on the Lincoln CBC at Sun City Lincoln on 12/28-12/29. The **Steller's Jay** incursion seems to have tapered off, but two at Cosumnes River Preserve (CRP) on 12/2 were apparently just the second occurrence at the lower preserve. Four **Barn Swallows** were found along Desmond Rd on 12/29. **Pacific Wren** reports were few and far between, which makes continuing **Winter Wren** reports all the more notable. Probably the same **Winter Wren** was back for a second winter near the Lake Solano campground, with another detected on 12/26

upstream along Putah Creek at Fishing Access #3. Two **Evening Grosbeaks** in Davis on 12/9 accounted for the only report of this species this month. A **Red Crossbill** was photographed on 12/24 at the old Sacramento City Cemetery, and up to 30 were reported from the Arden Park neighborhood near Carmichael from 12/25-12/26. A **Brewer's Sparrow** was a nice surprise on 12/30 in the Putah Creek Sinks, south of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, and the **Orchard Oriole** found at the UC Davis Arboretum on 10/11 continued into January. A **Nashville Warbler** found on 12/1 at CRP was unexpected for the season, and a first-winter male **American Redstart** found on the 12/31 Folsom CBC in El Dorado Hills off Silva Creek Parkway was a first for the count; it continued into January. For three winters now, a male **Summer Tanager** has wintered in Land Park in the vicinity of Fairytale Town, first reported this month on 12/12.

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 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: Steve Abbott, Dan Brown, William Clark, Lyann Comrack, Courtney Covington, Jim Davis, Lily Douglas, Konshau Duman, Andy Engilis, Jr., Gil Ewing, Tim Fitzer, Robert Furrow, Linda Gal, Daniel Gillingwater, Joshua Greenfield, Steve Hampton, Kirk Hardie, Ed Harper, Cliff Hawley, Larry Hickey, Scott Hoppe, Mackenzie Hollender, Emmett Iverson, Jeri Langham, Andrew Lee, Mark Martucci, Ed Pandolfino, Adam Panto, Ron Pozzi, Ian Souza-Cole, Samuel Schmidt, Steve Scott, Judy Spittler, Kevin Thomas, Vicki Ramsey, John Trochet, Alan Wight, Dan Williams, Lynette Williams, Rick Williams, and Ed Yong. Thanks to everyone for their reports—without them, this column would not be possible.

—Chris Conard

SAS New Members

Please welcome these new members:

James Behrmann	Kathy Knapp
Jonathan Clark	Jason Taylor
Courtney Covington	Emily Wilson
Janel Darroch	Kathryn Wong
Krystin Dozier	Stephen Woodward
Sue Evans	

Thank You For Your Generous Donations!

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A grant was awarded to Sacramento Audubon Society from Community Foundation of Utah at the recommendation of Barry and Elaine Harman Charitable Fund.

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.

See the Latest SAS Action on Facebook

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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, February 27, 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.

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February General Meeting

Thursday, February 15, 2024 at 7 p.m.

South America: Diversity and Rare Birds

Presented by John Sterling

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



Red-fronted Macaw