

The Observer

Sacramento Audubon Society

January General Meeting

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

This meeting will be a hybrid session. Participants can join the meeting on-site at Effie Yeaw Nature Center or from the comfort of their home via Zoom.

Birding Above The Arctic Circle

Presented by Glyn and Sylvia Dawson

Glyn and Sylvia Dawson arrived in the US from England in 1967. In the mid 80s they joined Thorn Creek Audubon in the Chicago suburbs and enjoyed bird counts and local outings. Glyn, as professor of biology and microbiology at the University of Chicago, was invited to many meetings overseas. What an opportunity to enjoy birding worldwide. Now retired, they are living in Granite Bay, California where their youngest son lives close by. They are excited to present their slide presentation "Birding Above The Arctic Circle" a record of their cruise around the island of Svalbard, 400 miles North of Norway.



Common Murre

Attend the Meeting in Person:

We will host a watch party at Effie Yeaw. The speaker will be joining us via Zoom. Registration is not necessary to attend the meeting at Effie Yeaw. Effie Yeaw Nature Center, 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael, CA

Attend the Meeting online via Zoom:

If you would like to attend the meeting via Zoom you will need to register for the meeting. Registration is required due to space limitations set by Zoom. Visit: <https://www.sacramentoaudubon.org/monthly-speaker>

Birds of the Delta—Sacramento Delta River Cruise

Birds of the Delta—Join us for a Sacramento Audubon charter cruise with Dolphin Charters on a comfortable two-decked vessel. This cruise starts out of Antioch Marina and is a winter highlight for birders, providing a special look at the richness of the California Delta. The species seen in this area include a variety of raptors such as Peregrine Falcon, Great Horned Owl, and Bald Eagle. We can expect to see huge numbers of waterfowl including a great variety of ducks. Other species will include Tundra Swan, Snow Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose and Canada Goose. With a 360 degree view from the deck, we'll see Sandhill Cranes and shorebirds feeding in the fields and mudflats. Numerous other bird species may be seen during the day, such as gulls, terns, passerines, and woodpeckers. There is also plenty of great habitat in which to find American Bittern.

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

Cost is \$90 per person.

Minimum age for participants is 12 years.

Length of trip is 7 to 8 hours.

This trip is limited to 26 participants.

Tickets for the cruise will be available for purchase beginning at noon on Saturday, January 13th at <https://www.sacramentoaudubon.org/delta-birding-2024>.

After purchasing ticket(s) you will receive an email with your ticket(s) and additional information about the trip, including the meeting time and place.



Peregrine Falcon. Photo by Daniel Brown

TICKETS ARE NON-REFUNDABLE. Cancellation of the trip due to bad weather will be at the discretion of the charter company; in case of cancellation the trip will be rescheduled for February 18th or February 19th. If you have to cancel for some reason, you may transfer (give or sell) your ticket to another person on your own.

Field Trips January 15 — February 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.

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 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.

Cosumnes River Preserve

Saturday, January 20, 2 p.m.
Expected length: 3 hours
Leader: Paul Miller (916) 768-7503
paul@pjmiller.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.

Michigan Bar

Saturday, January 20, 7 a.m.
Expected length: 5 hours
Leader: Chris Conard, (916) 203-1610
conardc@gmail.com

Maximum number of participants: 15
Registration is required for this trip.
Please email Chris to register.

We will focus on Michigan Bar Road and may visit portions of Latrobe and Meiss Rds, though access depends on road conditions and recent weather. Vast areas of open grassland and blue oak woodland interspersed with rocky outcrops and the Cosumnes River provide habitat for winter raptors, resident and winter songbirds, and perhaps a surprise or two. We'll have a mix of car birding and short to moderate walks. (Bring FRS radios if you have them.)

Steady rain will cancel the trip. There are no facilities on the remote roads, but we'll make a bathroom stop when moving between locations.

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

Effie Yeaw Family Nature Walk

Saturday, January 20, 10:30 a.m.
Registration is required through Effie Yeaw Nature Center. Please see sacnaturecenter.net for registration and other details.

Join Audubon birding leaders Dave Rosen and Sandra Steurer, and 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 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.

Beginning Birder Walk, William Pond Park

Sunday, January 21, 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

continued on next page

Field Trips continued from previous page

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.

Lincoln Wastewater Treatment Plant

Thursday, January 25, 8 a.m.

Expected length: 4 hours

Leader: Sonja Sorbo, (916) 390-8463

ssgasdoc@yahoo.com

Maximum number of participants: 6

Registration is required for this trip.

Please email Sonja to register.

On this morning trip we will start by birding the Lincoln water treatment plant. There are several large ponds which can hold a variety of ducks. Some years there have been hundreds of Canvasback and Wigeon present, with an occasional Redhead or Eurasian Wigeon in their midst. Depending on the water level, we might see shorebirds such as Black-necked Stilt, Greater Yellowlegs, dowitchers, Dunlin, and Lesser Sandpiper. While driving on the levees around the ponds, we will search the adjacent trees, fields, and fence posts for raptors, sparrows, woodpeckers, and other resident species. A small wetland area visible from the levees can hold rails, herons, egrets, gallinules, and Marsh Wrens. This trip will end around noon; if there is sufficient time, we might drive some nearby roads looking for flocks of geese and/or swans. Directions and confirmation of exact meeting location and time will be provided upon registration.

Staten Island

Saturday, January 27, 3 p.m.

Expected length: 2 hours

Leader: Betty Cooper and Rich Howard (916)

203-0952

RHowardA@gmail.com

As the sun begins to set, hundreds of birds fill the sky, and many descend to spend the night in the fields along the road. Sandhill Cranes will be in the area, and we will see other wintering birds as well. Ducks, swans, and geese (including hundreds of Cackling Geese), as well as shorebirds, feed in the flooded fields and marshy areas of the Delta, and raptors patrol overhead. Dress for changeable weather; bring binoculars and scopes if you have them. We will be birding by car, so this trip is accessible to all.

From Sacramento, take I-5 South to the Thornton/ Walnut Grove exit and proceed west towards Walnut Grove on W. Walnut Grove Rd. Go about 4 miles where you will turn left (south) towards the big silo. The turn is just past a green sign that says, 'Staten Island.' We will meet at the entry kiosk on the left, across the street from the silo. A chemical toilet is available here.

Gibson Ranch

Sunday, January 28, 7 a.m.

Expected length: 3 hours

Leader: Kevin Thomas, (916) 217-6946

bionerdkevin@gmail.com

Maximum number of participants: 8

Registration is required for this trip.

Please email Kevin to register.

As winter continues its grasp on the Central Valley, we will take a leisurely walk along the riparian parkland and wetland areas of this wonderful county park. We should get good looks at the local wintering birds and run into a few early migrants making their way north. Expect easy walking with frequent stops to scan the creek, riparian habitat, and surrounding grasslands to see what interesting birds we can find. Gibson Ranch County Park requires a Sacramento County Parks Pass or a day use fee for entrance. (The day use fee is \$6 at the time of publication. Fees may increase in 2024.)

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

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. One \$7 parking fee. Bring a lunch, water, and binoculars (scope if you have one).

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 Phoebe, 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 & 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@pjmiller.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. 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.

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 Sacramento County Park Pass or \$6 entry fee is required for all vehicles. (The day use fee is \$6 at the time of publication. Fees may increase in 2024.)

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

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Field Trip Findings

William Pond Park, (12/13)

Leader Mark Martucci reported:

Six birders detected 62 species of birds on a very cold December morning along the American River Parkway. Highlights included **Sharp-shinned Hawk**, **Red-breasted Sapsucker**, **American Kestrel**, **Purple Finch**, **Pine Siskin**, **Phainopepla** and **Greater Yellowlegs**.

William Pond Beginners' Walk, (12/10)

Larry Hickey, co-leader with Jane Van Kessel, Nancy Kapellas and Heather White, reported:

Although it was quite cold and foggy when we started out, 13 of us persevered and were rewarded by gradually clearing weather and a good morning of birding. In the beginning it was hard to make out anything more than the many **Canada Geese** and the loud sounds of the **Yellow-billed Magpies** but as the fog cleared we were able to get good looks at a cooperative **Northern Mockingbird**, some **White-crowned** and **Golden-crowned Sparrows**, and a **Red-shouldered Hawk**. We were able to get scope views of what appeared to be a hybrid **Red-breasted/Red-naped Sapsucker**, dozens of **Wood Ducks**, **Spotted Sandpiper** and several **Pied-billed Grebes**. A cooperative **Greater Yellowlegs** stayed close by while we were at the river. Despite the foggy start we ended with a total of 48 species.

Lincoln Grasslands, (12/10)

Leader Richard Barbieri reported:

Five people joined me on this crisp and clear morning to explore the grasslands and fields in and around Lincoln. Highlights for the day were a very nice look at a single **Purple Finch** in the top of a tree at the shopping center in Lincoln, a total of five **Bald Eagles** throughout the day with two adults seated together at Camp Far West Lake, two **Rufous-crowned Sparrows** and a **Rock Wren** at the lake as well as 16 **Ringed-necked Ducks** and one **Cinnamon Teal**. Total species count for the day was right around 75.

Sacramento NWR, (12/9)

Leader Cliff Feldheim reported:

We had a very nice day birding at Sacramento NWR. Although we were not trying to maximize the number of species we observed, a slow meander along the tour route produced 48 species of birds. Our goal was big groups of waterfowl, and the refuge did not disappoint. In the large permanent pond on the southeast end of the tour route, I estimated one group at 20,000–25,000 **Lesser Snow** and **Ross's Geese**. Along the northeast corner of the tour route, there was a second group of **Ross's** and **Lesser Snow Geese** that I estimated at 10,000-15,000 birds. **Greater White-fronted Geese** were sporadic and in much smaller groups, generally <100. We observed 10 species of ducks with **Northern Pintail** being the most abundant and in groups of hundreds and collectively with other species of ducks in groups of greater than 5,000. These large groups of waterfowl attracted some raptors, and we got good looks at an adult **Peregrine Falcon** eating a goose, and at least four different **Bald Eagles**.

Gull Identification Trip, (12/6)

Leader Ed Harper reported:

Calm conditions and gray skies greeted a small, but eager group about to undertake gull identification at the Nimbus Fish Hatchery. After introductions,



California Gull. Photo by Daniel Brown

Ed distributed several handouts to aid in the identification of gulls, gave a short discourse about mastering the complexities of the *larus* genera, and the morning began with an air of eager enthusiasm. Our first steps were halted by a flyover of a pair of **Peregrine Falcons**, marking a most propitious start to the day. An **American Kestrel** on a river cable added to our falcon count and that was augmented by a **Merlin** flyby as the morning was concluding. Gulls, though, were our objective for the morning and we soon were at our task. A confiding **Glaucous-winged Gull** started off our study and that was followed by four more gull species of various age classes. Although the gulls were somewhat sparsely distributed, it made viewing easier since the gulls could be clearly isolated for an in-depth study with scopes. We could not help but note other birds as well. We scanned the flocks of **Goldeneye Ducks** to locate a **Barrow's**, marveled at the **White-throated Swifts** rocketing through the air, and obligingly noted many passerine species. At noon the trip concluded just as the first few raindrops began to fall. A fitting end—we need the rain—to a fine morning shared with a wonderful group of folks and the gulls!

Wintering Raptors of the Valley, (12/3)

Leader Craig Swolgaard reported:

I led the trip on Meiss/Michigan Bar Roads to look for wintering raptors. Overall it was a great trip: got good feedback from people. About eight folks joined me as we car-pooled the 20 mile length of our trip. Some species of water birds or shorebirds were too far away to confidently identify, but a total of 31 bird species were seen. Along Meiss Road I was very surprised that we didn't see any **Ferruginous Hawks** at all. Very abnormal for this time of year at that location. However, we did see two **Ferruginous Hawks** at the end of the trip at Michigan Bar & Latrobe Roads. Missing **Prairie Falcons** was also unusual. However, it was fun to see a **Merlin** in one of the oak trees, close to **American Kestrels**, so many were able to look for the differences between the two species at a distance. Being able to see both **Cooper's** and **Sharp-shinned Hawks** within a short time was very gratifying for those who are still trying to learn the difference, which can be difficult. We saw a **Bald Eagle** near the shooting range on Meiss Road, three together along the Cosumnes River, and another flying downstream separately on the Cosumnes River. We spent over five hours birding.

East Yolo County, (11/29)

Leader Bill Bianco reported:

Seven of us started on a good cool fall morning. We had a total of 51 species for the four locations. Some of the species at the first stop: **Green Heron**, **Pied-billed Grebe**, **Belted Kingfisher**, **Black-crowned Night Heron**, **American Pipit**, **Western Bluebird**. At the second & third stops we saw **Wood Duck**, **Yellow-billed Magpie**, **Cedar Waxwing**, **Downy Woodpecker**, and **Oak Titmouse** to name a few. Our fourth stop was at Bridgeway Pond where **Blue-winged Teal**, **Cinnamon Teal**, **Hooded Merganser**, **Sora**, **Foster's Tern**, and **American White Pelican** were seen. Was a good birding day that all enjoyed.

Gray Lodge Wildlife Area, (11/26)

Leader Sonja Sorbo reported:

Once again, Gray Lodge delivered a terrific birding experience on a spectacular sunny autumn day. We were rewarded with views of 68 species. Upon our arrival, Parking Lot #14 resounded with the vocalizations of thousands of **Snow Geese** joined by a few of their smaller cousins, **Ross's Geese**. **Greater White-fronted Geese** were present but were vastly outnumbered. Several times during the day, hordes of geese rose up en masse, swirling around in the sky like giant pieces of confetti. It was breathtaking! Meanwhile, the ducks placidly went about their business — **Cinnamon**, **Blue**, and **Green-winged Teal** were all present, weaving amongst **Northern Pintail**, **Northern Shoveler**, **Gadwall**, **American Wigeon**, **Bufflehead**, and **Ring-necked Ducks**. A nice surprise was the appearance of six **Redheads** in the crowd of waterfowl. Several shorebird species were noted, including **Greater Yellowlegs**, **Black-necked Stilt**, **Killdeer**, and **Wilson's Snipe**. Scoping the edges of the tules yielded great views of a **Sora**, a **Common Gallinule**, and an **American Bittern**. They weren't fazed by a river otter which sped by them. In the same pond, a **Snowy Egret**, **Great Egret**, and **Great Blue Heron** were intently hunting. We were delighted when a couple of dozen **California Quail** crossed a trail in front of us, skittering around some **White-crowned** and **Golden-crowned Sparrows**, a **California Towhee**, and a **Fox Sparrow**. Raptors were plentiful, including **Red-shouldered**, **Cooper's**, and multiple **Red-tailed Hawks** plus a **Northern Harrier** and an **American Kestrel**. It seemed as though every tree held at least one **Turkey Vulture**! Passerines included **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**, **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, **Common Yellowthroat**, **Northern Mockingbird**, **Belted Kingfisher**, **Nuttall's Woodpecker**, **Bushtits**, **California Scrub-Jay**, **Spotted Towhee**, **Northern Flicker**, **American Pipit**, and three wren species (**House**, **Bewick's** and **Marsh Wrens**). **Black Phoebe**s seemed to be everywhere. Our final sighting was outside Gray Lodge in some agricultural fields where a pair of **Sandhill Cranes** were feeding. It was a fitting end to a wonderful day.

Nimbus Fish Hatchery, (11/25)

Leader Kevin Thomas reported:

A crisp cool morning for a field trip along the American River. We started off the morning with a fly by **swan species** that we weren't ready for and couldn't get a positive identification on. Species came quickly as we walked to the trail along the river and observed **Herring**, **Glaucous-winged**, and **Iceland Gulls** all sitting on the piers of the old fish weir. We were met with numerous **Common Goldeneye** and **Double-crested Cormorants** as well. We took a

Field Trip Findings continued from previous page

quick look into the hatchery outlet ponds to see the continuing **Northern Pintail** that has been resident for over two years now. As we walked down the path towards the willow and cottonwood habitat we were greeted by two **Osprey**, one of which flew directly over the group carrying a large fish. At the end of the dirt trail we were treated to a beautiful tan morph **White-throated Sparrow** hanging out in the blackberry thicket with some **Fox Sparrows** and **Hermit Thrushes**. Our biggest surprise came next as we approached two large pine trees along the bike trail and noticed an unfamiliar sapsucker. It was almost a pure **Red-naped Sapsucker** but some stray red feathers in the face and chest gave away this hybrid **Red-naped x Red-breasted Sapsucker**. We continued over to the picnic benches along the bike trail and spotted several male **Barrow's Goldeneye** with the crescent white face patch on purplish heads. As we made our way back to the parking lot after a wonderful morning we had one more surprise in store. A beautiful adult **Bald Eagle** circled above us a few times as it headed downstream to search for food. A perfect ending to a fabulous morning of birding with good company.

Cosumnes River Preserve, (11/24)

Leader Cathie LaZier reported:

14 people braved 44 degree temps and 15mph wind blowing across the water to join me this cold morning. Early on an adult **Bald Eagle** was spotted overhead; it soon landed close by and feasted on a large bloody waterfowl. Waiting nearby for scraps were several **Turkey Vultures**; their presence emphasized the extreme size of the eagle. The winds kept most waterfowl and shorebirds sheltering in reeds, so we did not have the usual close up views, but near the end of the walk we had a great scope view of a **Lesser** and **Greater Yellowlegs** side by side, which was very helpful for the beginners."

Bannister Park, Sacramento Bar, (11/16)

Leader Stan Hunter reported:

It was a beautiful autumn morning when 10 birders started three and a half hours of birding. We were greeted by numerous **Yellow-billed Magpies** at Bannister Park, as well as **Western Bluebirds**, **Yellow-rumped Warblers** and a lone **Dark-eyed Junco**. The Magpies looked stunning in their iridescent plumage, brought out by the morning sunlight. It was nice to see a healthy and sizable flock of these lovely endemics. We then started our leisurely stroll down the bike path to Sacramento Bar, deviating onto the fire road that leads past San Juan Rapids where we saw **Spotted Sandpipers**, **Common Mergansers**, **Mallards**, **Buffleheads** and a **Killdeer**. Along the way, we caught sight of a **Great Horned Owl**, tucked up into the foliage of a Cottonwood tree, hiding from the harassment of a very squawky **Red-shouldered Hawk**. Continuing down the trail, we saw plenty of **Acorn Woodpeckers**, **European Starlings**, and **Cedar Waxwings**, as well as **Nuttall's** and **Downy Woodpeckers**, **Bewick's Wrens** and a **Red-breasted Sapsucker**. **Acorn Woodpeckers** and **Red-shafted Northern Flickers** were going into and out of holes in dead trees, and **White-breasted Nuthatches** were seen and heard in the trees. A small number of **sparrows** showed themselves, but the list included **White-** and **Golden-crowned**, **Song** and **Lincoln's**, plus **Spotted** and **California Towhees**. An **Orange-crowned Warbler** was seen briefly by a



Great Horned Owl at Bannister Park.
Photo by Tina Bosh

few birders. As we approached the first of the dredge tailing ponds, we saw many **Turkey Vultures** circling overhead, clearly feeding on the dead salmon in the American River. At the pond, we were able to catch a glimpse of several **Wood Ducks**, **Canada Geese**, a **Green Heron** and a **Belted Kingfisher**. Other "usual suspects" that we encountered include a couple of **Downy Woodpeckers**, **House Finches**, **Lesser** and **American Goldfinches**, **Anna's Hummingbirds**, **Great Blue Herons**, **Herring Gulls**, **American Robins**, **California Scrub-Jays**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**, and a **House Wren** that was heard but not seen. An impressive total of 52 species were seen or heard by all or some of the group. Thanks to all who came out for a nice walk on a lovely morning, and special thanks to Peter Perrine for keeping the eBird list.



Acorn Woodpecker at Bannister Park.
Photo by Tina Bosh

Lake Solano County Park, (11/15)

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

Three birders showed up to join Amy and Nancy for a pleasant day at Lake Solano. Highlights included seven **Common Gallinule**, a good number of **Wood Ducks**, elegant male and female **Hooded Mergansers**, and very vocal **Belted Kingfishers** flying up and down the river. There were hundreds of **Bufflehead** and a nice selection of vocal **Sora** along with a **Virginia Rail** calling. We found the requisite **Phainopepla**, **California Quail**, numerous **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** and **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, both **White-breasted** and **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, as well as **Northern Flickers**, **Nuttall's**, **Downy**, and **Acorn Woodpeckers**. No Lewis's Woodpeckers were detected unlike the abundance of 2022. Raptors included **Red-tailed Hawk**, **Osprey**, and vocal as usual, a **Red-shouldered Hawk**.

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 \$6 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/.

Upcoming Bird Festivals

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.
<https://snowgoosefestival.org/>

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/>

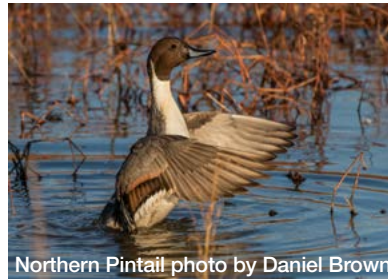
Ducks In Scopes

10 a.m. – 1 p.m. on the following dates:

Saturday, January 13 & 27, 2024

Saturday, February 10, 2024

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 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.



Northern Pintail photo by Daniel Brown

What Birding Means to Me

I was hoping this little column would take flight. Everyone who reads *The Observer* has their own reason they love birding, and I would love to see that shared with our members. We have members who approach bird observation from a scientific perspective, others are focused on conservation, and still others love finding those rare birds that ever so quickly move through the valley. Some of you love the social aspect, and others love the wonderful isolation of birding solo. Please take a few moments and send me a short blurb about why you bird for next month's column. Email me at sacaudubonpresident@gmail.com.

In the last edition I wrote about my personal experience with birding, how it is a sacred and spiritual activity for me. I truly believe that being in nature is healing, both for our bodies and soul. This aspect is a huge motivation for me to continue serving on the Board, and I will be forming an Outreach Committee to promote birding to non-members. So many people in the Sacramento area could benefit from learning how to go birding. Reaching out to younger people, those with disabilities, along with the disadvantaged will continue to grow our membership. The more people who find the time to go birding, be in nature, and experience its healing aspects, the better our world will be.
—Paul Miller

Seasonal Sightings November 1 – 30

November is a great time to be in the field. A time for stray water birds, lingering summer residents, and often a few surprises. It is also a time when you get the feel for how the winter season is shaping up. Is it going to be a big finch year? Lewis's Woodpecker year? Rough-legged Hawk year? Unfortunately, the answers to those questions appear to be, "No." There are decent numbers of **Varied Thrushes** about, still good numbers of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** from the huge influx earlier in the fall, and **Steller's Jays** are turning up here and there in the lowlands. In terms of stray waterfowl, Beals Point at Folsom Lake produced a **Surf Scoter** on 11/16 and up to three **Red-breasted Mergansers** throughout the month, with one of the latter seen from Folsom Point on 11/4. A **Greater Roadrunner** was a welcome find on 11/25 in the Dunnigan Hills of Yolo County along Rd 8.

There were a few notable shorebirds, including up to three **Semipalmated Plovers** lingering at the Sacramento Regional WTP throughout the month, with one at Staten Island on 11/29. The last stronghold of **Mountain Plovers** in our area appears to be the fields along Hwy 45 in Yolo County, just south of the Colusa County line. A high of 69 was reported. One to two **Marbled Godwits** were found at Beals Point and up to eight were at the Davis Wetlands. There were unusually widespread reports of **Western Sandpipers**. They seem to be lingering longer, and at more locations, than they were just a few years ago. A **Brown Pelican** reported flying over Cosumnes River Preserve (CRP) on 11/19, at the tail end of the Central Valley Birding Symposium, was a nice surprise.

Interestingly, while **Lewis's Woodpeckers** appeared in single digits, if at all, in their usual haunts, **Acorn Woodpeckers** were widespread on the Valley

floor in places they are not typically reported. On 11/6, a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was found at the Cache Creek Preserve west of Woodland. A **Western Flycatcher** was found on 11/22 at CRP, and single **Cassin's Vireos** were reported at CRP and from multiple sites in Davis. Single **Red Crossbills** were reported from Carmichael on 11/15 and from Davis Community Park on 11/25. A **Chestnut-collared Longspur** was reported along Larrobe Rd in eastern Sacramento County on 11/1, and a **Grasshopper Sparrow** was found near the Capay Bridge at Cache Creek on 11/4. The **Orchard Oriole** found at the UC Davis Arboretum on 10/11 continued into December. A late, lingering **Yellow Warbler** was photographed in Woodland on 11/1. Townsend's Warblers appeared to be more widely reported throughout the region than usual, and a late **Wilson's Warbler** was found at CRP from at least 11/21-11/25

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: Ralph Baker, Max Brodie, Dan Brown, Lyann Comrack, Konshau Duman, Gil Ewing, Linda Gal, Maureen Geiger, Joshua Greenfield, Cliff Hawley, Emmett Iverson, Jeri Langham, Andrew Lee, Mark Martucci, Ron Pozzi, Tom Pritchard, Steve Scott, Dan Tankersley, Kevin Thomas, John Trochet, Lynette Williams, and Rick 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:

Susan Brammer
Lenore Brashear
MaryAnn Clark
Spencer Fitzpatrick
Lorena Guerrero
Anna Kavanagh
Robin Miller
Jeff Molander
Diana Schokrpur
Jeffrey Tochterman

Thank You For Your Generous Donations!

General Fund

Catherine Clark *In Memory of Vicki Brandon Walker*, Ruth Coelho, Betty J. Cooper, Mike Cruikshank, Clifford Feldheim, Mary Galanis, K. Globus & B. Klass, Terrie Gray, Lorena Guerrero, Ann Kohl, Margaret Kraus-Kennedy, Eric Liskay, Leroy Mcherson, Jeff Molander, Bob & Becky Norris, David Rial, Sara Rosen, Marjorie Shock, Jane G. Taylor, Fred Turner, Swaminathan Vasudevan, Your Cause, Blackbaud Giving Fund

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Bobelaine Sanctuary

Mike Cruikshank, William Gardner, K. Globus & B. Klass, Richard & Mary Howard, Eric Liskay, Maria Martinez, Peter & Lisa Perrine, David Rial, Stephanie Trenck

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.

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.

Sacramento Audubon Society Membership Application

www.sacramentoaudubon.org

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

SAS Membership per address/household (for 12 months): \$ 35

I want to add an extra Donation of: \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Mail this form with your check payable to Sacramento Audubon Society to the address shown above. You can also use your credit card or PayPal account on SAS website:

<https://www.sacramentoaudubon.org/join-renew>

Name _____ Date _____

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New members will receive *The Observer* in color via email. Please provide your email address above. If you would prefer a black & white, paper copy mailed to you instead, please email sacaudubonmembership@gmail.com.

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

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White-tailed Kite Daniel Brown

Sacramento Audubon Society Information

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

Internet Address: www.sacramentoaudubon.org

Membership/Subscriptions: Jane Van Kessel
sacaudubonmembership@gmail.com
P.O. Box 160694, Sacramento, CA 95816-0694

Seasonal Observations: Chris Conard
2405 Rio Bravo Circle, Sacramento, CA 95826
(916) 203-1610, e-mail preferred: conardc@gmail.com

Program Chair: Anthony Asay, e-mail: sacaudubonmeetings@gmail.com

The Observer Editor: Carla Resnick, e-mail: carlaphoto@gmail.com

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.

January General Meeting

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

Birding Above The Arctic Circle

Presented by Glyn and Sylvia Dawson

