

The Observer

Sacramento Audubon Society



General Meeting

Thursday, January 21, 2021

Webex Meeting 7pm

See details below

Sierra Pollinators

Helen Loffland

How to join the meeting: November's meeting will be held online via Cisco Webex. To receive a link to join the meeting, email meetings@sacramentoaudubon.org. There is no cost to join the meeting and you do not have to be a member to attend. There is a cap of 100 attendees. For more information visit www.sacramento-audubon.org/monthly-speaker.

Helen Loffland has a BS in Wildlife Biology from UC Davis, and an MS in Biology from CSU, Sacramento. She has spent the last 25 years studying Willow Flycatchers and other birds in meadows of the Sierra Nevada. She also has experience working with a wide variety of Sierran raptors, carnivores, plants, invertebrates and fish. As a meadows specialist at the Institute for Bird Populations her most recent work has focused on riparian bird and bumble bee response to land management activities.

Since 2015 Helen has worked towards building IBP's pollinator program with research examining habitat selection, floral resource use, and response to land management by Sierra Nevada bumble bees at study sites in Amador, Eldorado, Nevada, Sierra, and Plumas counties. She recently wrapped up 5 years of work with bumble bees in post-fire landscapes and is currently focused on bumble bee response to meadow restoration projects in on the Eldorado and Tahoe National Forests and on private lands.

At the January meeting she will provide an overview of her work on bumble bees

General Meeting continued on page 2

This Month's Suggested Birding

JANUARY 2021 From Richard Barbieri, offleash56@yahoo.com

Winter is a great time for birding. All the wildlife preserves that have been featured in previous suggested birding trips are still worth another trip, and in better times we always feature a New Year's Day trip to the Cosumnes Preserve, which you can still do on your own—out on those trails it's easy to socially distance. Here are a few more suggestions.

LINCOLN GRASSLANDS

The grasslands and flooded farmlands in this area west of Lincoln provide some of the best winter birding in the northern Sacramento Valley. There are a multitude of country roads to explore to the west of Hwy 65, north of Sunset Blvd, east of Pleasant Grove Road, and south of Riosa Road near the small town of Sheridan. Wintering flocks of waterfowl, shorebirds, and birds of prey thrive here at this time of the year.

SACRAMENTO BAR

Another popular area on the American River Parkway, this spot offers a variety of habitat, riparian riverbanks, open grassland within its interior along with a few ponds, and sometimes lowland flooded areas in winter. Explore the many trails within this area or follow the main trail around its exterior. From Highway 50, drive north on Sunrise Blvd; turn left on Fair Oaks

Blvd and take the first left on Pennsylvania and follow it into the park. A Sac County Park Pass or \$5 entry fee is required for all vehicles.

BRIDGEWAY ISLAND POND, WEST SACRAMENTO

This is probably the most reliable and easiest place to see Blue-winged Teal in the Sacramento area. This ebird hotspot link has exact directions at ebird.org/hotspot/L473045. It's a good place to include with a trip to the Yolo Bypass area, mentioned in the September and December suggestions, available on our website.

BOBELAINE

This 430-acre National Audubon Sanctuary on the Feather River is managed by Sacramento Audubon. At this time of

year you can find resident and wintering birds such as Hermit Thrush, Fox Sparrow, crowned sparrows, both towhees and various raptors. If there has been rain, the trails may be wet and muddy. There are usually trail maps available at the entrance, or you can print one out on our website, found under the Go Birding heading. From

Sacramento take Hwy 99 north toward Yuba City and about

2 miles north of the Feather River Bridge turn right on Laurel Avenue. Follow Laurel to the dead end at the Bobelaine parking lot.



Ferruginous Hawk
Linda Pittman

General Meeting continued from page 1

throughout the region and present research from a recently published paper on floral resource selection by bumble bees on the Plumas National Forest.

To read more about IBP's pollinator program and download papers and reports visit: www.birdpop.org/pages/sierraPollinators.php.

Sacramento Audubon meetings are now held online the third Thursday of the month. The public is welcome. Visit our website www.sacramentoaudubon.org/monthly-speaker for further information. To keep up with current happenings follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/SacramentoAudubon.

Anthony Asay, Program Chair



Photo:
Travis
DuBridge

A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION TO HELP BIRDS

Tired of the same old New Year's Resolutions? Lose weight! Exercise more! Get organized!

Here's an idea, how about resolving to help the birds around you? The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's "Seven Simple Actions to Help Birds" (www.birds.cornell.edu/home/seven-simple-actions-to-help-birds/) offers a manageable list of suggestions. The list includes videos and you could resolve to do a few of them, like making your windows safer for birds and drinking bird friendly coffee or, challenge yourself to all seven. Either way you'll be making an impact.

Looking for more ways to help birds in 2021, check out the following pages on the Sacramento Audubon website:

- **Action Alerts:** Receive timely email notification of birding, conservation and other issues that affect local wildlife when you sign-up for Action Alerts, www.sacramentoaudubon.org/conservation-alerts.
- **Cat Policy:** An estimated 2.4 billion birds are lost to cat predation every year in the United States. Sacramento Audubon Society's cat policy offers an overview of

the problem, lays out our position, and gives suggestions on how you can address this serious issue, www.sacramentoaudubon.org/cat-policy.

- **Lights Out for Migration:** Help birds migrate safely to their summer and winter homes by turning out lights during migration, www.sacramentoaudubon.org/lights-out.
- **Creating Bird Friendly Spaces:** Native gardening creates habitats that support a wide variety of birds. Find resources for creating your own bird friendly space, including ideas for nest boxes on this informative page, www.sacramentoaudubon.org/creating-bird-friendly-communities.
- **Injured Birds:** What should you do if you see an injured bird or animal? Find resources to help answer that question on the Injured Bird page. You'll also find suggestions for preventing bird injuries and information on when it is best to help or not to help a baby bird, www.sacramentoaudubon.org/injured-bird.

Mary Forrestal

THE SACRAMENTO AUDUBON SOCIETY POLICY ON CATS

Sacramento Audubon Society, agrees with the science put forth by American Bird Conservancy on the impact of cat predation on wild birds. Based on this information, we consider cats, domestic or feral, to be a grave threat to birds and other wildlife. We feel strongly that steps must be taken to limit contact between wild birds and cats. Towards that end, Sacramento Audubon Society supports the following policies:

Feeding of cats or maintenance of cat colonies should be prohibited in any designated wild areas. The American River Parkway is one example of a designated wild area in the Sacramento region.

Feeding of cats or maintenance of cat colonies in wild areas should be prohibited even if these areas are not designated as "wild". Wooded parks and riparian areas are examples of this.

Pet cats should be kept indoors.

Local animal shelters and rescues should educate the public about the dangers cats pose to wildlife. Specifically, both their policies and literature should state that free-roaming cats harm and kill birds by the billions and that cats should be kept indoors only unless safe alternatives are provided. This information should be highlighted, not buried or omitted altogether.

What You Can Do To Help

We offer many suggestions for proactive things you can do to help, including keeping your cats indoors but also ways to keep them happy indoors. It can be tricky, but we also hope you can talk to your friends and neighbors about their cats. Look to sacramentoaudubon.org/cat-policy for a background about domestic cats and predatory deaths caused by cats that may help you in any discussion you undertake. Other resources can be found on the website including help in finding low cost spay and neuter clinics.

What You Can Do To Help

You might think we at the Sacramento Audubon Society are a bunch of cat haters. To the contrary, many of us love cats. Many of us own cats. Some of us rescue and foster cats. However, our primary mission as a Society is to advocate for the protection of birds and other wildlife. We would be failing at this mission if we did not address the seriousness of cat predation. Cats, people, and birds can coexist. We encourage our local government, community leaders, and fellow humans to give this matter the serious consideration it deserves and ask that they act on our policies and recommendations.



Galileo and Scaramouche run riot with Diana Hickson



Jackie bosses Daphne Reiner around



Sandy lies in the sun all day with her employee Heather White



Seymour rules the roost at Jane Van Kessel's house

WINTER FINCH INVASION

I'm a strong partisan for the West, with our mountains, prairies, deserts, and generally more varied habitats. But the East does have a few things going for it, including its numbers and diversity of warblers, and its winter finches. Reports of a "superflight" of finches in the eastern US and Canada exist as a faint echo around Sacramento this winter, but we are seeing excellent numbers of Purple Finches and very good numbers of Pine Siskins. There have also been a few local reports of Red Crossbills and Evening Grosbeaks.

"Winter finches" include several species that show up in varying numbers each fall and winter, plus a few that only arrive occasionally. Many are considered irruptive, which is characterized by being hard to find in some years and abundant in others. The birds will stay nearer their breeding grounds except when the seed crops they depend on are insufficient, and they are forced to search elsewhere. The numbers are most dramatic when a very productive breeding season is followed by a poor cone crop in the fall. That's just what is happening this year in the East. In the West, it can be more subtle or just involve a few species, while in the East you may have major movements of up to eight species of finches, plus Red-breasted Nuthatches, which show a similar pattern and are sometimes referred to as honorary finches. This can be a dramatic event and sometimes the birds are pretty desperate to find food, but they are also well adapted to this cycle of boom and bust.



Pine Siskin
Chris Conard

their bold face patterns, are much more easy to identify than males.

All About Birds (www.allaboutbirds.org) at Cornell's Lab of Ornithology, has a decent selection of calls of these species and you can find many more examples by searching xeno-canto.org. Check the Winter Finch Forecast (finchnetwork.org/winter-finch-forecast-2020) for a lot of background on the different species, though it is mostly focused on movements in the East. Red Crossbills and their call-types and cone-specific bill sizes are a topic for another day, but there is good info on the finchnetwork site. Keep an eye and ear out for Evening Grosbeaks, and I'm still looking (and listening) for my first Cassin's Finch in Sacramento County (there are a few records from past years).

Chris Conard

Chris Conard is a Natural Resource Specialist at the SRWTP Bufferlands, having worked there since 1997 with a committed team to improve the habitat for Burrowing Owls and other wildlife. For more information on the Bufferlands, visit www.bufferlands.com.



Purple Finches
Chris Conard

Around Sacramento, unless you have a feeder visited by Pine Siskins and Purple Finches, some of this can quite literally go over your head. For much of this fall, I've mostly been detecting Pine Siskins by their whiny flight calls. In the past couple of weeks I've been seeing more along the American River. They seem especially fond of alder seeds and also liquidambar balls. Purple Finches make a distinctive "pit" or "pik" that sounds like some flight calls of Red-winged Blackbirds, so it takes some practice. As far as I can tell, Purple Finches are more widespread and numerous in Sacramento County this season than they have been in over 20 years. Another interesting thing about Purple Finches: females, with



Evening Grosbeak
Chris Conard

COUNT WITH THE KIDS IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY

For more than 100 years, birders all over the world have looked forward to December, the time of the Christmas Bird Counts. Data gathered from these counts in December and January, is enormously valuable to scientists and other researchers regarding the abundance and distribution of the world's bird species.

Next month is also the time for the Great Backyard Bird Count which was launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society. The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) was the first online citizen science project, to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real time. Birds Canada joined the project in 2009 to provide an expanded capacity to support participation in Canada. In 2013, GBBC became a global project when they began entering data into eBird, the world's largest biodiversity-related citizen science (community science) project.

These two great annual bird science projects have not been abandoned this year because of the pandemic. People here in the United States and the world over are just being creative and participating differently. Both these events offer families a chance to bird, count birds and introduce the joy of birding to others while social distancing. The Sacramento area is full of choice birding spots, especially in winter. You don't even have to go far as your backyard, a nearby park, a school yard, or a nature center or preserve will do for both events.

It's fairly easy to participate safely by birding in your family group, just count all the birds your group sees and keep track of them. This can be for half an hour or all day. Hopefully, you will want to enter them in the great data base called eBird. (You can find out more with Chris Conard's informative eBird article in the November issue of the *Observer*. Find a link to *Observer* issues at www.sacramentoaudubon.org/observer-past-issues.) eBird is the citizen scientist part of the equation and makes the efforts worthwhile beyond the pleasure everyone receives from engaging in them.

To be consistent with past years' dates for the two CBCs, the weekend to do this would be the first weekend in January, the 2nd or 3rd.

There'll be more information on the GBBC next month. The dates for it are February 12-15. Lots of information can be found at www.birdcount.org. Happy New Year and happy birding.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!

Tom Biglione, Rowland Gaal, Ruth Mercedes Gay, Melissa Gates, Richard & Mary Howard, Christine Hurley, Maria Nicholas Kelly, Paul Miller, Bob & Becky Norris, Fred Turner and Your Cause-NPO Nonprofit made donations to the **General Fund**.

Tom Biglione, Melissa Gates, Debara Johnson, Judith Lamare & James Pachi and Jane G Taylor made donations to the **Education and Conservation Fund**.

Diana Brooks & Lauren de Boer and Melisa Gates made donations to the **Bobelaine Sanctuary**.

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



facebook.com/SacramentoAudubon

You can enjoy the photos and commentary without joining Facebook

SAS EDUCATION CHAIR NEEDED

For the past 3½ years Sacramento Audubon has been fortunate to have Gesna Clarke's energy and enthusiasm leading the Education Committee. Due to health concerns, Gesna needs to step away from her volunteer position as Education Chair.

The Education Chair is a volunteer position that coordinates the efforts of lead volunteers on the Education Committee. The chair and lead volunteers are responsible for a variety of activities focused on reaching out to both adults and children. Examples of these activities include community outreach, beginning birder activities, and family friendly and youth activities.

The Education Chair also serves as the primary contact to the general public, fielding inquiries and passing them on to the appropriate committee member. If you are interested in this position and helping Sacramento Audubon fulfill one of its primary missions, please contact Bill Bianco at president@sacramentoaudubon.org.

Field Trip Information

Due to the continuing coronavirus threat, SAS is not offering field trips for the month of January. Suggested places to bird according to the month can be found on page 1.

SACRAMENTO AUDUBON'S ACTION ALERT



Join our Action Alert subscriber list and receive monthly alerts on important local issues affecting birds, wildlife and habitat. www.sacramentoaudubon.org/conservation-alerts. Speak up for those who cannot speak!

SACRAMENTO AUDUBON'S NEW BOOKSHELF



Need an idea for the bird and book lover in your life or yourself? Check out the SAS Bookshelf, recommended reading from Sacramento Audubon Society members. On the SAS Bookshelf, you'll find suggestions for informative and interesting books perfect for birders and bird enthusiasts. All the books listed have been enjoyed and recommended by SAS members. Go to www.sacramentoaudubon.org/sas-bookshelf for the complete list. If you wish to purchase a book, remember that by using Amazon Smile and selecting the Sacramento Audubon as your charity of choice, 0.5% of eligible purchases will be donated to Sacramento Audubon Society.



Mission Statement Sacramento Audubon Society

The mission of the Sacramento Audubon Society is to:

- Promote the protection and scientific study of wild birds;
- Promote the enjoyment and appreciation of wild birds through community outreach;
- Provide, encourage and support environmental educational opportunities; and
- Provide proactive leadership in the conservation of open space in the Sacramento region.

Seasonal Sightings

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

The most attention-grabbing bird this November was a **Bean-Goose** found along Desmond Rd at Cosumnes River Preserve (CRP) on 11/14 among the tens of thousands of **Greater White-fronted Geese**. It was seen the following morning by the early birders, but flew off and was refound only briefly. Despite a concerted effort on subsequent days, the bird was not reported again. During long periods when most of the geese had their heads tucked it would be nearly impossible to separate it from the white-fronts. Most observers are provisionally calling this a **Tundra Bean-Goose**, though the identification between it and the **Taiga Bean-Goose** can be tricky, with at least some individuals appearing intermediate. The two **Bean-Geese** have only been officially treated as separate

species since 2007, and the California Bird Records Committee has accepted just two records so far (a **Tundra Bean-Goose** and a **Taiga/Tundra Bean-Goose**). The immature **Surf Scoter** first found on 10/24 downstream of the Gristmill access to the American River Parkway (ARP), continued through 11/4, and another was found off Sherman Island on 11/15. **Red-breasted Merganser** reports included one off Beals Pt at Folsom Lake on 11/19-30, one at the Woodland WTP on 11/22, plus up to four on Lake Camanche on 11/24.

Flocks of up to 50 **Band-tailed Pigeons** over Davis may have been fire refugees, as thousands of acres of their Coast Range habitat were burned over the summer. An American **Golden-Plover** found at the Woodland WTP on 11/28, continuing into December, was an excellent find and very late in the season for this species. Winter **Golden-Plovers** are usually of the

SAS NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome these new members.

Kim Erickson
Rowland Gaal
Greg Gollaher
Scott Muldavin
Karen and Lynn Powell
Mathew Thayer
Stephanie Trenck

Sacramento Audubon Chapter Board Meetings

Please contact President, Bill Bianco, at biancowm@yahoo.com; or 916-372-3318 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. The next meeting is January 26 and would normally be held at 7pm at Turley Associates, 2431 Capital Ave, Sacramento, CA 95816.

Minutes of Board Meetings can be found online 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. All new members will only receive our newsletter online so be sure to include your email address and check if you would like to be added to our Action Alert List.

Sacramento Audubon Society Membership Application

www.sacramentoaudubon.org
membership@sacramentoaudubon.org

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

Date _____

The Observer Newsletter \$35 per address (1 Year) _____

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Total Enclosed \$ _____

Make checks payable to Sacramento Audubon Society or use your credit card
or PayPal on our website at: www.sacramentoaudubon.org

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP + 4 _____

Email _____ Check for Action Alert _____

New members will receive *The Observer*, in color, via email. (Please provide your email address above.) If you would prefer a black and white paper copy mailed to you instead, please email: membership@sacramentoaudubon.org

Observations continued

Pacific variety. **Mountain Plover** reports have declined precipitously in the past two decades, so a flock reported for much of the month along Hwy 45 north of Knights Landing, with a high of 37, was encouraging. A report of 200+ along Robinson Rd in Solano County on 11/23 brings to mind the glory days of decades past. **Pacific Loon** reports included one on Lake Natoma from 11/2-4, one to two between 11/2-13 off Beals Pt, and multiples on Lake Camanche on 11/24, along with perhaps record numbers of **Common Loons** there.

Long-eared Owls were more widely reported than usual, with singles near Esparto on 11/15, from Ryer Island on 11/16, Cache Creek Preserve on 11/17, at Mississippi Bar on 11/20, and near Davis on 11/25. One was flushed at CRP on 11/28 along with two owls that got away unidentified. Spenceville Wildlife Area hosted an impressive 62 **Lewis's Woodpeckers** on 11/24. An

Evening Grosbeak was reported at Sailor Bar (ARP) on 11/19, and **Red Crossbills** were fairly widely reported, including small flocks in Orangevale on 11/3 and 11/20, nine on 11/9 at Rollingwood Bluffs near Lake Natoma, one at Verde Cruz Creek in Orangevale on 11/10, one at Willowbank Ditch in Davis on 11/8, and another at Slide Hill Park in Davis on 11/23. **Purple Finches** continue to be more widespread and numerous than at any time in recent memory and **Pine Siskins** are in very good numbers as well. A **Black-throated Sparrow** was a nice surprise on 11/30 adjacent to Lake Solano, and single **Yellow Warbler** reports were very late for the season at CRP on 11/15 and 11/28.

We feature photos of some of the highlight birds on the Sacramento Audubon Society Web site (sacramentoaudubon.org/bird-sightings).

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 listserve (cvbirds.org) and in eBird (ebird.org). It is impossible to list everyone, but I want to thank the following for their reports:

Max Brodie, Aidan Brubaker, Peter Grunow, Denise and David Hamilton, Steve Hampton, Hugh B. Harvey, Cliff Hawley, Scott Hoppe, Logan Kahle, Kathy Kayner, Jeri Langham, Andrew Lee, Mark Martucci, Roger Muskat, Michael Perrone, Zane Pickus, Ron Pozzi, Steve Scott, Gaven Stacey, John Trochet, and Rick Williams.

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

Chris Conard

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White Tailed Kite Dan Brown

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

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, except June and August, when we publish abbreviated editions.

ATTEND THE NEXT SACRAMENTO AUDUBON PROGRAM

7pm, January 21, 2021

Helen Loffland, *Sierra Pollinators*
January's meeting will be held online
via Cisco Webex. To receive a link to
join the meeting, email
meetings@sacramentoaudubon.org.