

The Observer

Sacramento Audubon Society



General Meeting

Thursday, May 20, 2021

Webex Meeting 7pm

See details below

Populations and Habitat of the Yellow-billed Magpie in Sacramento
Dan Airola

How to join the meeting: The May 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.sacramentoaudubon.org/monthly-speaker.

Dan Airola is a Wildlife Biologist and Ornithologist who has lived in Sacramento since 1985. Dan conducts research and conservation management for birds of concern in Sacramento and surrounding areas, often with support from Sacramento Audubon. Study species have included Purple Martins, Tricolored Blackbirds, Swainson's Hawks, and migratory and wintering songbirds. He serves the Central Valley Bird Club as a Board member, Conservation Chair, and Editor of the journal *Central Valley Birds*. His recent book on 20 years of research and management on Purple Martins is available at cvbirds.org.

For many years, Dan observed the spotty distribution of the Yellow-billed Magpie within Sacramento. He undertook this study

General Meeting continued on page 2

BIG DAY OF GIVING

It's Coming Right Up!

Mark your calendars! The Big Day of Giving (BDOG) is on Thursday, May 6th. BDOG is an annual online event in which local non-profits can gain extra funds to support their missions! You can help SAS with its mission by going to: www.bigdayofgiving.org/sacramento-audubonsociety. There is a \$15 minimum donation. Starting April 22nd, you can schedule your donation prior to the event. Use the web address above.

The Golden 1 Credit Union match is back! Once again, when you use your Golden1 credit card or debit card, Golden 1 will match your donation! Longtime BDOG sponsor, Golden 1 Credit Union, is offering a \$50,000 proportional match to the donations its members support during Big Day of Giving. Gifts made both during the early giving period (April 22-May 5) and during Big Day of Giving on May 6 will count toward the proportional match.

This Month's Suggested Birding

MAY 2021 Cathie LaZier, empid77@gmail.com

May is a great month for birding, with nesting birds singing and displaying and migrants such as flycatchers and warblers arriving or passing through. Any spot along the American River Parkway should be good, but here are a few specific suggestions.

Harrington Access, American River Parkway

From the parking lot take the dirt path running downstream along the river. Several side trails run right down to the water and the habitat of willow, oak, shrubs and grassy areas is good for a variety of birds including California Quail and Red-shouldered Hawks. Keep an eye out for migrating warblers and returning Western Kingbirds and Ash-throated Flycatchers. The river is full of islands and inlets where you can find herons, egrets and Common Mergansers.

After about a mile you'll see Rio Americano High School over the levee and you may wish to turn around here. You can retrace your steps or for a quicker return take the foot-of-the-levee trail. An alternate walk is to go upstream where you'll reach William Pond Park. From American River Drive take Harrington Drive south into the park.

There is a \$5 per car entrance fee; your Sac County Park Pass is good here.

Fleming Meadow Trails, El Dorado Co, near Pollock Pines

This system offers a variety of trail options. On an early morning walk possible birds in spring are Band-tailed Pigeons, Hairy and Pileated Woodpeckers, Mountain Chickadees, various migrating flycatchers, vireos and warblers, and the ubiquitous Steller's Jays, Ravens and Red-breasted Nuthatches. A suggested route is to take the trail on your left from the parking lot, 10N72, and when it splits bear left on 10N72C, then left again on trail 8A. This trail descends steeply

May Birding continued on page 2



Yellow-billed Magpie
Linda Pittman

conservation management for birds of concern in Sacramento and surrounding areas, often with support from Sacramento Audubon. Study species have included Purple Martins, Tricolored



Ash-throated Flycatcher
Linda Pittman

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to explain why magpies are common in some areas and absent in others. He and his colleagues, Lily Douglas and daughter Layla,



Dan Airola

surveyed sites with magpies, described habitat conditions, and created a model that predicts the size of population based on habitat conditions. They then tested the model by survey-

ing over 40 sites with appropriate conditions. What factors explains magpie occurrence and abundance? Tune in to find out!

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/Sacramento Audubon](https://www.facebook.com/SacramentoAudubon).

Anthony Asay, Program Chair

New To the Website: Past presentations from this year's on-line speakers are available on the SAS website. They can be viewed at www.sacramentoaudubon.org/monthly-speaker. You have to scroll down to the past presentations.

May Birding continued from page 1

down to Camp Creek, and usually has Pacific Wrens along the creek. It is a more difficult trail due to elevation change, and staying on the wider roads is easier. There is a trail map posted at the parking lot which you can photograph on your smartphone, and it's available online at www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fsbdev7_018780.pdf

From Sacramento take Hwy 50 to Sly Park Road (Exit #60); turn right and go about 4-1/2 miles past Jenkinson Lake, then left on Mormon-Emigrant Trail. Go about 2 miles and turn right on Blue Gouge Mine Road (shortly after Ferrari Mill Road) and follow it down to the trailhead parking lot.

Hagan Community Park, Rancho Cordova

From any parking area, walk over to the river, crossing the bike trail. A dirt trail goes both up and down river, occasionally coming up to the bike trail so watch for bikes on these short bits. A walk through the developed park can turn up a variety of passerines in the trees. This is a good family birding area, as there are multiple picnic areas, ponds and play areas. From Folsom Blvd. take Coloma towards the river, bearing left at the light onto Chase Drive which leads into the park. You can either park at the Hagan Community Center lot on the right, or drive into the park past the kiosk; (standard parkway fees apply only if the kiosk is manned).

Orangevale Community Park

Bordered by Hazel Ave. on the west, Oak Avenue on the north, and Filbert on the east, this large park includes some excellent natural areas, with narrow dirt trails and wider paved paths winding through the shady oak woodland, occasionally crossing a small creek, (usually dry), with occasional open grassy areas. All the usual small passerines, including wrens, titmice, bushtits, nuthatches and finches, can be found, as well as some blackbirds around the stable area. There is parking on Hazel, Oak and Filbert; the best parking for the natural area is 7301 Filbert.

Jensen Botanical Garden, Carmichael

Birding and Botany! This 3-1/2 acre park is great for a short birding session. In half an hour I had over 20 bird species. Near the parking area are planted beds with a variety of flowers, blooming in the springtime. A paved walkway curves up through a grassy area to the plant nursery. A partial list of trees and plants is available at the kiosk, just past the entrance. The park is located at 8520 Fair Oaks Blvd., Carmichael, between Hollister and Marshall.

Global Big Day - May 8, 2021

On Saturday, May 8, will you join birders from more than 175 countries and be a part of Global Big Day? You don't have to commit to birding for 24 hours—even 5 or 10 minutes of watching birds at home makes you part of the team. Last year, Global Big Day brought more birders together virtually than ever before.

Participating is easy—you can even be part of Global Big Day from home. If you can spare 5 or 10 minutes, report your bird observations to eBird online or with our free eBird Mobile app. If you have more time, submit checklists of birds throughout the day. You never know what you might spot. Your observations help Cornell Lab better understand global bird populations through products like the animated abundance maps brought to you by eBird Science (ebird.org/science/status-and-trends/abundance-animations).

Last year, Global Big Day brought more birders together virtually than ever before. More than 50,000 people from 175 countries submitted a staggering 120,000 checklists with eBird, setting a new world record for a single day of birding. Will you help us surpass last year's records? However you choose to participate, please continue to put safety first and follow your local Covid guidelines.

How to participate

Create an eBird account at eBird.org if you don't already have one: eBird is a worldwide bird checklist program used by millions of birders. It's what allows Cornell Lab to compile everyone's sightings into a single massive Global Big Day list—while at the same time collecting the data to help scientists better understand birds. It's 100% free from start to finish.

- Watch birds on Saturday, May 8. It's that simple. You don't need to be a bird expert or go out all day long, even 10 minutes of birding from home counts. Global Big Day runs from midnight to midnight in your local time zone. You can report what you find from anywhere in the world.
- Enter what you see and hear in eBird: You can enter your sightings via the website ebird.org, or download the free eBird Mobile app (at the App Store or Google Play) to make submitting lists even easier. Please enter your checklists before Tuesday, May 11, to be included in our initial results announcement.

BIRD-FRIENDLY COFFEE

To date more than 2.5 million acres of Central American rainforest have been destroyed or degraded to grow coffee. Most coffee plants grown are sun-loving—a faster growing, more productive plant. Essential habitat to rainforest and migratory birds is being lost so that, ironically, we can have our morning cup o' joe while reading the news about habitat loss and climate change.

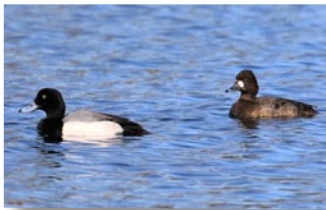
But there is an alternative that will reverse this trend. GrrlScientist, a senior contributor at *Forbes*, reports that shade grown coffees that are Bird-Friendly Certified “are guaranteed to support bird habitat” (*Forbes, Bird-Friendly Coffees Really are for the Birds*).

Some of you already brew this type of bean but, according to an online survey of members/donors of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, most of us don't. Imagine if the 45 million bird fans in the US started buying Bird-Friendly Certified coffee? We would literally alter the landscape for the better. So wake up and smell the Bird-Friendly Certified coffee.

Bird-Friendly Certified coffee is available online or locally at Whole Foods, Davis Food Coop and Wild Birds Unlimited. Be sure to look for the Smithsonian Bird-Friendly Certified label.

A YEAR NEAR HOME

Beginning a year ago, because of the pandemic, I began writing short pieces for the *Observer* to somewhat compensate for the missing field trip material. It's not quite back, but a lot has happened over the now 13 months of altered life. A year ago I offered that I hadn't been bored with a month of birding mostly in my local patch along the American River Parkway, roughly from the Gristmill access down, not quite, to Watt Ave. After 13 months, I can honestly say I've enjoyed, to varying degrees, just about every one of the 252 outings near home (entered in eBird) since the start of the pandemic. Kimya and I have lived here a few months shy of twenty years, and I think I've done as much local patch birding as I have in the previous 19.



Greater Scaup (L) and Lesser Scaup female (R)
Chris Conard

As can't be said enough, it's the variety, when each outing is a little different, that makes birding so engaging. Of the 158 species recorded in my patch in this little over a year, a few stand out. A short list of some of the more surprising species include a Greater Scaup, followed by a Lesser Scaup (both quite rare in the immediate area—especially the Greater), Surf Scoter, Calliope Hummingbird, a Horned Lark (my first for the patch), a Lawrence's Goldfinch (my second), and a

Blackpoll Warbler (found by Jeri Langham—I missed his Chestnut-sided Warbler). Equally memorable was checking in on the regular Peregrine Falcon (it has mostly been missing for the past month), and enjoying the invasion of Pine Siskins and Purple Finches (which are now all but gone for the season). A Western Screech-Owl sticking its head out of a nest box was a nice bonus. I'll even admit to enjoying the patchily-marked domestic goose, which Kimya and I call “The Funny Goose,” and the pale Mallard (“Blondie”), and her partner with a seafoam-colored bill (“Seafoam,” naturally). Like most people, I'm really looking forward to spring migration heating up. Any day now!

This portion of the Parkway is very nice, but it's not one of the go-to, primo spots like Ancil Hoffman, Upper Sunrise, or Sailor Bar (unless Jeri has just found a rarity). That said, there's a nice mix of forest along with the river to produce a diversity of birds, with a changing cast of characters through the seasons. Add in river otters, beavers, coyotes, a nice mix of dragonflies and butterflies, the occasional herp, and a changing vegetative palette, and there is little reason to be bored. It has been fun birding with Jeri, since my patch is really his patch. We went from distanced birding, to masked birding, to (partially) vaccinated and masked birding (I discovered that if you hold your breath while looking through the binoculars, they don't fog!). What a strange time to be alive. As the years unfold, I hope this is my high-water mark for birding near home, given that I'd like to venture out more than I have this year, but it's a privilege to have such a great option so close.



Blackpoll Warbler
Chris Conard

Chris Conard

THE 2021 NATURE BOWL

Extraordinary times call for an extraordinary nature contest, going on now, March 15 through May 14!

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is inviting families across our great state to participate in the fun and educational Nature Bowl competition.

Nature Bowl has been an exciting science event for teams of third through sixth grade students for more than 35 years. Students usually compete in person at natural resource sites throughout CDFW's North Central Region. Last year saw the event cancelled, along with everything else.

This year Nature Bowl is rolling with the challenging times by issuing this nature challenge to all California families with school age students.



Maureen Geiger with students
at the 2018 Nature Bowl

Nature is Calling! Your California nature, that is...

Just like the spring before us, it's time for rejuvenation, time to emerge from lockdown hibernation, time to get outside and give your family a healthy dose of what we all need: Nature!

Your challenge is to work together as a family to compete in these five nature activities—and win cool nature prizes!

Here are the activities:

- Nature Relay—Scavenger Hunt Safari
- Nature Investigations—Discover and Become
- Bell Ringers—Create a Game
- Team Problem Solving—Nature Snapshots
- Environmercials—Film an Advertisement

The Nature Bowl Family Challenge is open from March 15 through May 14, 2021. Sign your family up today!

Contact genelle.treaster@wildlife.ca.gov to register.

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 May 25.

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

SEE THE LATEST SAS ACTION ON FACEBOOK



facebook.com/SacramentoAudubon

You can enjoy the photos and commentary without joining Facebook

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!

Daniel A Airola, Brad Anderson, Pamela Bone, Gesna Clarke, Betty J Cooper, Lisa & Chris Couper, G J Crandall, John Payne & Peggy Cranston, Norman Eade, Carole S Gates, Arthur Hartwell, Suzy Hayes-Tripp, Gretchen Karl, Scott & Julie Kenney, Madi/Rod Elsea Lee, Ken Mateik & Karla Meadows, Steve Ball & Susie Nishio, Marc Pelletier, Sarah Powell, Kathryn Rian, Nancy Schoellkopf, and Rick Soehren made donations to the **General Fund**.

Daniel A Airola, Carole S Gates, Scott & Julie Kenney, Joann McAllister, Sarah Powell, Nancy Schoellkopf, and Rick Soehren made donations to the **Education and Conservation Fund**.

Jane Adams, Daniel A Airola, Carole S Gates, Marianne Leach, Scott & Julie Kenney, Sarah Powell, Nancy Schoellkopf, and Rick Soehren 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.

Field Trip Information

Due to the continuing coronavirus threat, SAS is not offering field trips for the month of May. 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 effecting birds, wildlife and habitat. www.sacramentoaudubon.org/conservation-alerts. Speak up for those who cannot speak!



SAS WEBSITE HAS A NEW BIRDING LOCATIONS RESOURCE

Sacramento Audubon Volunteers have been hard at work creating an interactive online birding locations guide. Working from the *Birding in the Sacramento Region* booklet, last published in 2008, they've updated and added information. Now this resource is available at your fingertips, whether on your smartphone, tablet, or computer.

We'd love to hear your feedback on this new resource. Check it out at www.sacramentoaudubon.org/birding-locations. If you have corrections or recommended changes for a location, suggestions for a new location, or any other feedback, please email webmaster@sacramentoaudubon.org.

Special thanks to Nancy Kapellas for creating our fantastic maps. Thank you to Maureen Geiger, Chris Conard, Paul Miller, Dan Airola, and Ed Harper for providing updated information and to the entire website committee for their extraordinary efforts in putting this project together.



REVISION TO BYLAWS APPROVED

The revised bylaws were approved by the membership on March 31, 2021. You can find a copy of the bylaws on the SAS website at www.sacramentoaudubon.org/organization. Thank you to all chapter members who voted.

Seasonal Sightings

March 1 to March 31 Rare and Unusual Bird Reports www.cvbirds.org/ListServ.htm

This March was another shockingly dry month in the second very dry winter in a row. It's difficult to complain in the face of such great birding weather, but one worries that summer dryness will be here all too soon. There were many reports from the field, though relatively few new finds. That is often the case in March, where it is a great time for birding, with a mix of winter species and early spring arrivals (like swallows, **Western Kingbirds**, and **Bullock's Orioles**), but it isn't until the second week in April, and often later, that things begin to really pick up with new arrivals. One of the two **White-winged Scoters** found earlier in the season continued near the Folsom Lake dam through the end of the month. The cooperative male **Broad-billed Hummingbird**, found on 1/29 in a private yard in central Davis, continued until 3/3. There were several early reports of single **Vaux's Swifts** in

March, beginning on 3/6, with some impressive confirmatory photos in the eBird reports.

A **Common Poorwill** was heard singing from the Placer County portion of Folsom Lake SRA, near Beek's Bight, on 3/26, and one was found in Orangevale on 3/27. **Mountain Plovers** were regularly reported along Hwy 45 in Yolo County, just south of County Line Rd, with a high of 62 on 3/7. It is nice to have a consistent location for this species that has become much harder to find locally in the past two decades. A **Snowy Plover** seen from Desmond Rd at Cosumnes River Preserve (CRP) on 3/27 was a couple weeks early for this locally rare shorebird, and a **Least Bittern** was recorded singing (through the din of **Canada Geese**!) at the Davis Wetlands on 3/31—on the early side for this diminutive, uncommonly detected species.

The cooperative **Red-naped Sapsucker** continued at Rollingwood Bluffs adjacent to Lake Natoma through 3/6. A

SAS NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome these
new members.

Daniel Ansoorge	Suzy Hayes-Tripp
Marianna Bekhet	Gretchen Karl
Pamela Bone	Maura Kelly
William Carroll	Shirley Opie
Seth Dasmann	Odile Roques
Peter and Shana Dellos	Isaiah Santistevan
Monica Gutierrez	Claudia Schwalm
	Chanda Tucker

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.

Observations continued

Hammond's Flycatcher was found on 3/5 and 3/20 on a closed portion of CRP. It probably wintered for the second year in a row, but had been missed on most searches through the winter. A **Sage Thrasher** found on 3/18 along Robinson Rd continued through 4/1, and a female **Cassin's Finch** continued in an Orangevale yard throughout the month. The **Harris's Sparrow** found in February with a crowned-sparrow flock adjacent to the Putah Creek Riparian Reserve continued into April. And while a study statistically questioned the validity of the Patagonia Picnic Table Effect, a **Green-tailed Towhee** found near the yard that hosted the **Broad-billed Hummingbird** continued through 3/13, and lent anecdotal support to the PPTE.

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

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) _____

Donation for Conservation/Education \$ _____

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

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 I want to thank the following for their reports:

Max Brodie, Aidan Brubaker, Brant Brumbeloe, George Chrisman, Konshau Duman, Hugh Harvey, Jim Holmes, Scott Hoppe, Rich Howard, Emmett Iverson, Jeri Langham, Andrew Lee, Mark Martucci, Michael Perrone, Nora Papian, Zane Pickus, Ron Pozzi, Jim Rowoth, Steve Scott, Gaven Stacey, Eddie Tache, John Trochet, and Lynette Williams.

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

Chris Conard

Editor's Note:

Patagonia picnic table effect

The Patagonia picnic table effect is a phenomenon associated with birding in which an influx of birdwatchers following the discovery of a rare bird at a location results in the discovery of further rare birds at that location, and so on, with the end result being that the locality becomes well known for rare birds, even though in itself it may be little or no better than other similar localities. PPTE for short.

Wikipedia

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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, May 20, 2021

Dan Airola

*Populations and Habitat for the
Yellow-billed Magpie in Sacramento*

The May meeting will be held online via Cisco Webex. To receive a link to join the meeting, email meetings@sacramentoaudubon.org.



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