

The Observer

Sacramento Audubon Society

177,000 Tricolored Blackbirds Saved in 2020

Breeding colonies of California's endemic Tricolored Blackbird expanded this year to a number of nesting sites where they have not been observed in years, as Audubon California's Tricolored Blackbird Working Group concludes its sixth summer of field operations.

The trill and white flash of the Tricolored Blackbird is an indelible part of landscapes across California, and especially in the Central Valley. Working closely with dairy producers, we protected more than 177,000 birds in 2020. In most years colonies are reliably found in the same areas, often even in the same field. This year a few colonies were discovered in places we haven't seen them before.

Each spring and summer, Audubon California works with landowners and other partners to protect this species across the state. The initiative is a collaboration between farmers, agricultural associations, governmental agencies, researchers, and conservation organizations that have all recognized the importance of a multi-faceted and cooperative approach to promote the long-term survival of the Tricolored Blackbird.

"Our field biologist reports 100 percent of the known colonies were protected this season," said RaeAnn Dubay, with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service. "We look forward to the continued partnership with



Tricolored Blackbirds James Scott

Audubon and our farmers to protect the Tricolored Blackbird."

Historic colonies may have been as large as 100,000 nests. Colony size declined in recent years due to continued habitat loss. This year, the largest colony detected was estimated to host some 25,000 birds. Audubon's 2019 report *Survival by Degrees* found that Tricolored Blackbirds will lose up to a third of their current range under even the least severe climate change scenario.

Since 2014, Audubon California has led this collaborative effort through partnerships with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, Dairy Cares, and Western United Dairies. The program demonstrates the effectiveness of partnerships between conservation groups and agriculture interests to support farmers and protect birds.

"The partnership that Western United Dairies has had with Audubon has been very important, both to the Tricolored Blackbird and to dairy farmers," said Paul Sousa, Director of Environmental Services for Western United Dairies. "Dairy farmers provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species, such as the Tricolored Blackbird. This partnership has allowed dairy farmers to be compensated for the loss of feed that we need for our cows while protecting nesting Tricolored Blackbirds, a win-win."

We are grateful to our partners and our Audubon community. Together, we are winning the fight to save the iconic Tricolored Blackbird.

California Audubon

This Month's Suggested Birding

Birding in the Valley in August and September • Maureen Geiger

Finding birds in the Sacramento area towards the end of summer can be a challenge due in part to the lack of water, so for those months SAS often suggests birding in the mountains or on the coast. The following suggestions are a mix of sites that may still produce good, local birding.

Bucks Creek/Silva Valley Parkway Trail, El Dorado Hills

Experience has shown that walks along this Creek are good any time of the year including resident woodpeckers, nuthatches, bluebirds, towhees, wrens, Green Herons, Common Gallinules, plus possible Hooded Mergansers. Walking along the edge of the Creek in this varied habitat there is always a chance for early migrating birds and unusual finds.

Directions: From Sacramento on Hwy. 50 east, take Silva Valley Parkway, Exit #31, drive north on the Parkway to the light at the intersection with Serrano Parkway. Make a U-turn at the light and park immediately on your right.

Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area

Someone asked recently why SAS so often suggests YBWA as a birding hotspot. One reason is because this can be a spectacular place to bird during fall and winter months. Other wildlife areas can say the same but are not as close to Sacramento. Summer is a somewhat different matter when the basin is mostly dry and dusty. However, flood-up of fields for shorebird migration begins in July by which time shorebird migration is well under way.

Directions: From Sacramento on I-80 west, take the first exit at the west end of the Yolo Causeway, East Chiles/Rd. 32A, Exit #78. Turn right at the stop sign, go under the freeway, make a left up onto the levee; then drop down into the Wildlife Area.



Hooded Merganser by Alan Schmierer
(public domain)



Yellow-breasted Chat by Chris Conard

Spenceville Wildlife Area

This scenic recreational area of rolling oak woodland, streams, reservoirs and ponds offers a variety of wildlife and is, I think, under-birded. Possible birds include Yellow-breasted Chat, Lewis's Woodpecker, Rock Wrens, Rufous-crowned Sparrows and more.

Directions: Because this is a large and complex area with many sites along the way, for detailed directions and descriptions on how to make the most of the day, go to:
<https://www.sacramentoaudubon.org/north-of-sacramento/#lincoln-spenceville>.

University of California, Davis Arboretum

Closer to home, if you would like a shady, pleasant walk in a lovely, varied landscape, the Arboretum is just the ticket. In addition to often well-marked gardens featuring plants from all over the world, this 3-mile loop is mostly level and shady and due to its proximity to the Putah Creek waterway, it feels cooler than the surrounding areas. Close-up looks at residents such as Wood Ducks, Double-crested Cormorants and Green Herons are rewarding, and in September, early migrants might be found.

Directions: From Sacramento on I-80 west, exit at Richards Boulevard/Downtown Davis, Exit #72, bear right, go under the overpass and at the light turn left onto 1st Street; then left onto D Street and into the large parking lot. There are many signs regarding where you can and cannot park, so choose your site carefully. Walk west to the trail into the Arboretum which can be accessed from both sides of the Creek.

Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

Stone Lakes, south of Sacramento, is well designed for families with small children as it offers a wide, level cement trail that loops through the Refuge for easy walking. The year-round water supports marsh birds such as Green Heron, Sora, Belted Kingfisher, Song Sparrow and Common Yellow-throat while in the surrounding ag and fallow fields Swainson's Hawks, Red-tails, Mourning Doves and Western Meadowlarks can be found. Several small stands of Narrow-leaved Milkweed (*Asclepius* sp.) have attracted migrating Monarch Butterflies in September. **Directions:** From Sacramento on I-5 south, two miles south of the Elk Grove exit, take Exit #504 heading west on Hood-Franklin Road and drive .8 of a mile to the NWR entrance on the left. There is a large parking lot and handicapped accessible restrooms.

Laguna Creek Wetlands, Elk Grove



Great Egret by Chris Conard

This wetland sandwiched between housing on the north and south consists of a paved trail meandering along the Laguna Creek. Mostly sunny, the marshy wetlands are bordered by urban plantings including many oaks. Close looks at Common Gallinules, Cinnamon Teal, Snowy and Great Egrets and Double-crested Cormorants are possible and unexpected species always a possibility. This is a good walk for beginners, and is stroller and small child accessible.

Directions: From Sacramento on Hwy. 99 south, exit at Elk Grove Boulevard and head east; pass Elk Grove-Florin Road, and less than a mile later turn left onto Porto Rosa Drive. Follow to Jack Hill Park and the parking area. Restrooms are available in the parking lot.

Redwood Retreat

Summer in the Valley can be a challenge. The birding is often slow, and when it's really hot around Sacramento, the mountains to the east are just not tall enough.

Usually, but not always, the coast provides a respite. During a period that saw temperatures around 110°F locally, hitting a shocking 116°F in Portland, Kimya and I visited Humboldt and Del Norte counties. Near the coast, it was 65°F. Somewhat by accident, the trip turned into a focus on several of the great redwood parks. The last time we spent any considerable time in this habitat was the 1990s. In the process, I came across an excellent website with park and trail descriptions to all of the accessible old growth redwood groves in the state, as well as to all of the giant sequoia groves: www.redwoodhikes.com

We visited the northernmost readily accessible redwood grove, about eight miles into Oregon, and enjoyed walks in Jedediah Smith and Prairie Creek Redwoods State Parks, and sites off the Avenue of the Giants, in Humboldt Redwoods State Park. We also visited some coastal sites and inland sites away from the big trees.

It's striking how different the weather and relative lushness is north of Arcata compared with the groves off the Avenue of the Giants, which are farther inland. In southern Humboldt County, it was 25 degrees warmer and some of the hillsides were brown adjacent to the redwood groves (it felt more like home). The mossier, lusher, fogger north was quite different from what I've grown accustomed to. I really enjoyed each of the groves we visited, but the time of day and the angle of light really can affect the experience, so my favorite sites tended to be those we visited in the morning or the late afternoon. To get a feel for each site, you'd need to visit in multiple seasons and times of day.

The birding was pretty slow, though there were a few highlights. It had been quite some time since I had seen and heard Canada Jays (Prairie Creek). It was also a lot of fun to see a Yellow-breasted Chat perform a flight song at Arcata Marsh. We saw very (very) distant scope views of Tufted Puffins on Castle Rock off Crescent City (plus thousands of breeding Common Murres), and four distant Marbled Murrelets off the Klamath River mouth. We missed the Horned Puffin (by a day) that had been spending time in Trinidad Harbor, but enjoyed seeing four Purple Martins flying along the beach at Humboldt Lagoons State Park. An American Dipper in Bull Creek was an unexpected treat. Swainson's Thrushes were far and away the most common singer where we visited, with fair showings by Pacific-slope Flycatchers, Pacific Wrens, Varied Thrushes, and Wilson's Warblers. This was our first real vacation since the start of the pandemic (actually staying in a hotel!), and was a really nice change of scenery and climate.

Chris Conard



Humboldt Redwoods State Park by Chris Conard



Lady Bird Johnson Grove by Chris Conard

A True Friend to the Land

As many of you know, in early June, Ken Poerner died peacefully at home surrounded by friends after a 10-year battle with prostate cancer. His beloved dog, Bella, was also present and has a new home with the hospice nurse and her family.

Ken's love of natural areas and open space landscapes grew from his association with the Solano Land Trust where he worked for almost 25 years, first as a volunteer and then as the Land Steward for the nonprofit's 12,000-plus acres of open space and ag land. He had a profound influence on this organization during those years and was rewarded in small part by having a trail named for him in the Lynch Canyon Open Space Preserve. For a wonderful tribute to him by the Solano Land Trust and more on what he accomplished, visit: <https://sololandtrust.org/evistas/ken-poerners-parting-gift>



Ken Poerner

Shortly after he retired from SLT in 2016, we went for a walk at Bobelaine. Not surprisingly, he fell in love with this magical place and soon became the Preserve's volunteer maintenance guy. In a September, 2019 Observer article Ken explained how this happened: "I noticed the trails needed mowing; so I mentioned that if SAS needed help with mowing, I could help." Ken assumes Maureen talked to someone at SAS and said, "Next thing I know I'm getting handed the keys." The timing couldn't have been more perfect because the person who had maintained the trails in prior years was no longer able to continue the work. Sacramento Audubon Board President Bill Bianco worked with Ken on several of his projects at Bobelaine. He comments that Ken is low key, but he sure gets things done. Ken was also quoted as saying: "What I do at Bobelaine is not especially hard work, most of the time. It's a good use of my skills in retirement. Skills like working with tractors, chainsaws, weed control, building and repairing benches, signs, gates, trail work and planting. I enjoy being outside taking care of a wild area. I also enjoy seeing people on the land that I have a part in maintaining." It certainly didn't hurt that he could also bird to his heart's content while doing the good work he did there.

Sacramento Audubon Society has benefitted from Ken's love of birds, the land and natural areas in several tangible ways. His legacy includes a large donation for continued maintenance at Bobelaine. To honor him, SAS has named the trail's end at Bobelaine the Ken Poerner River Overlook. Here, one can sit on one of the benches he made and enjoy the beauty and solitude of the Feather River. Donations may be made in his name to the SAS Bobelaine Fund.

He also assisted with Benicia, Sacramento and Folsom Christmas Bird Counts for many years and especially enjoyed the Kids' CBCs he helped with. Seeing it as a valuable tool to document sightings for studying bird populations, Ken was an early champion of the use of eBird.

Ken led many trips with me for SAS, but his favorite was always at Lynch Canyon, Solano County, a wonderful place any time of year but especially for raptors in winter or for a cool walk when the heat has settled into the Valley.

In addition to volunteering, Ken loved to travel the country in his truck and camper. I had the great good fortune of traveling all over the United States with him chasing birds and seeing wonderful country for the last 15 years. I will miss him and our time and travels together always.

Maureen Geiger, June, 2021

After Controversy, the Duck Stamp Contest May No Longer Require Hunting Scenes

The Biden administration signaled it wants to overturn a rule change that upset artists and fueled worries about fewer dollars for protecting habitat.

Last May, the Trump administration changed the rules of the federal duck stamp contest. The duck stamp is not a postage stamp but a type of permit that waterfowl hunters are required to purchase and that other supporters of conservation voluntarily buy. The government has used funds raised through stamp sales to acquire and protect some 6 million acres of habitat at more than 300 national wildlife refuges since 1934. Wildlife artists compete each year for the honor of having their artwork featured on the following year's stamp.

Those rule changes, which Audubon first reported in 2019, made "Celebrating our Waterfowl Hunting Heritage" the permanent theme of the art contest. They also required that each entry include hunting imagery, and that all five contest judges have experience with waterfowl hunting. To comply with the new mandates, artists in last year's competition painted empty shotgun shells and duck calls floating in the water. The scenes looked to some observers like litter and ignited a public outcry over the perceived politicization of what had been a wholesome, beloved corner of the art world.

Faced with that blowback, the government is now working to scrap the hunting requirements. A preliminary notice published online indicates that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) plans to reinstate the previous rules, beginning with the 2022 contest. A spokesperson for the FWS declined to comment but cautioned that the agency has not yet formally moved forward with a proposal.

Throwing out the pro-hunting mandate would give artists back their creative freedom, says Rebekah Knight, who took second place in the 2016 contest and won the junior duck stamp competition in 2006. "It is relieving to think that I might not have to struggle to compose a design within the confines of this limiting rule that requires the inclusion of hunting elements," Knight said in an email. "I enjoy seeing an occasional decoy or boat

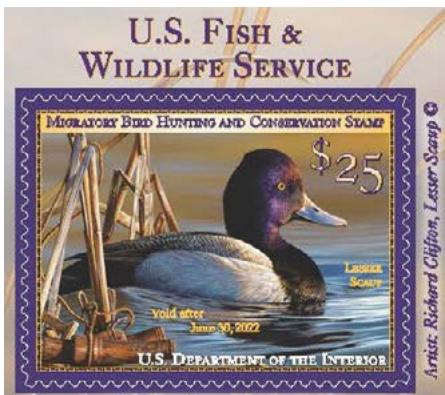
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in the background, but having those things forced into the image every year would get very old."

The Biden administration has taken aim at many other Trump-era environmental policies that are more significant than the rules for an art competition. This month alone, the administration suspended all oil and gas activities in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, began the process of restoring protections for endangered species, and took steps to overturn a rule that left many wetland and stream habitats without protection from development and pollution.

Andy McGlashen, Associate Editor, *Audubon Magazine*



2021-2022 Federal Duck Stamp

Credit: USFWS

2021-2022 Duck Stamps are Now Available

Federal Duck Stamps are conservation revenue stamps; 98 percent of the purchase price goes directly to help acquire and protect wetland habitat and purchase conservation easements for the National Wildlife Refuge System. Wetlands acquired with Duck Stamp dollars help purify water, aid in flood control, reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities.

Federal Duck Stamps are sold at many sporting goods stores and other retail locations. You can also buy them at many national wildlife refuges, and online through USPS.

Salmon Habitat Restoration at Ancil Hoffman Park

In an effort to restore habitat for salmon and steelhead, gravel restoration projects have been undertaken in the American River. A major project was undertaken two years ago at Sailor Bar that resulted in successful increases in salmon and steelhead nests in the restored gravel. Another gravel restoration project is scheduled for Ancil Hoffman Park. There will be heavy equipment in and around the river near Effie Yeaw for about six or seven weeks beginning in late August 2021. It will be strange to see heavy equipment in the river, but steps are taken to assure the equipment is managed to eliminate contamination of the river. Habitat for fish should be significantly improved. Further information about this project can be found at <https://www.waterforum.org/AH/>



Artwork by Stephanie Taylor
used with permission from Water Forum

Lary Hickey

Helping Connect Kids and Nature

With COVID closures and restrictions, our own outreach programs on hold, Sacramento Audubon began sponsoring Effie Yeaw's program "Nature in Your Classroom" in April of 2021. Reaching out to Title 1 elementary schools in the Sacramento Unified School District, we were able to bring this fantastic virtual program to over 300 students. The response has been terrific, both from the students and the teachers.



Effie Yeaw's "Nature in Your Classroom" takes the Nature Center to the school. When COVID shut down the in-person program, the staff of Effie Yeaw quickly adapted their program and began offering a virtual version via Zoom. In the program, students learn about local wild animals and their habitats, exploring skulls, fur, and feathers, and meeting Effie Yeaw's animal ambassadors.

We look forward to sponsoring this program for more students in the 2021-2022 school year. Effie Yeaw plans to offer both virtual and in-person programs, moving forward.

"The biggest challenge is to connect with the appropriate people at the Title 1 schools. To let them know we are willing to sponsor this program for their students," said Daphne Reimer, who is heading this program for Sacramento Audubon.

If you have a connection to a Title 1 school, or teacher that would like to take advantage of this program, have them contact president@sacramentoaudubon.org. Effie Yeaw is currently scheduling programs for the next school year.

You can help bring Effie Yeaw's "Nature in Your Classroom" to even more students, by donating to the Sacramento Audubon's Education and Conservation Fund.

To donate, visit <https://www.sacramentoaudubon.org/donate>

Thank You For Your Generous Donations!

General Fund

Rachael Cowan, Betty J. Cooper, Lynn Daly, Susan Fregien, Pablo Garza, Nancy Gronert, Gregory Hoyt, Timothy & Angela Jackson, Barbara Jeffus, David Jones, Bruce & Peggy Kennedy, Glenn Lomax, Nancy Marsh, Debbie Michel, Patricia Morehead, Deborah Rowlett & Juan Schulz, Gerald (Jerry) Schaar, Bob Slakey Jr., Jane Waln, and Stuart S. Walthall

Education and Conservation Fund

Susan Fregien, Timothy & Angela Jackson, Bruce & Peggy Kennedy, June A. Ritzman, Margaret Roberts, Gerald (Jerry) Schaar, and Jane Waln.

Bobelaine Sanctuary

Terry Dozier, Elizabeth Etgen, Selma Fields, Mary Forrestal *donated in Honor of Ken Poerner*, Maureen K Geiger, Amy A. Hibbitt, Timothy & Angela Jackson, Bruce & Peggy Kennedy *donated in Memory of Bruce Swinehart*, Linda Melching, Gerald (Jerry) Schaar, Christie Vallance, Jane Waln, Sally Walters *donated in Memory of Ken Poerner*.

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.

Seasonal Sightings

June 1 to June 30

Rare and Unusual Bird Reports • <https://groups.io/g/centralvalleybirds>

June is a notoriously slow month for birding around Sacramento, though it is a very important time for local breeders. With the severe drought, early drying out of vegetation, and drying up of local wetlands, there were still a fair number of interesting reports. Up to 40 **Redheads** were seen at the Woodland WTP throughout the month, representing the only dependable local occurrence of this species in the breeding season. Two male **Allen's Hummingbirds** coming to a feeder mid-month to the west of Clarksburg made for nice yard birds.

A **Snowy Plover** at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area on 6/7-8 was a nice find, as was another at the Sacramento Regional WTP on 6/28. More than 500 **Wilson's Phalaropes** were seen at the Woodland WTP on the fairly early date of 6/21. Perhaps these early arrivals were there because of the region-wide drought. Thirteen **Willets** were at the nearby North Regional Pond on 6/19, and nine **Willets** were found at Beals Pt, Folsom Lake, on 6/18. The **Neotropic Cormorant** first found at Ellis Lake in Marysville on 5/28 continued into late June. Single **Least Bittern** reports included one at Cache Creek Wild Wings Park on 6/21, singles from the Conaway Ranch, and reports throughout the month at the Davis Wetlands. A **Glossy Ibis** was photographed along Catlett Rd to the west of Lincoln on 5/29, and there were continued reports on both sides of the Sutter/Placer line through at least 6/4. Only one bird was reported each time, though there could be more than one accounting for these reports.

A first spring male **American Redstart** was seen singing at a normally closed portion of the Cosumnes River Preserve (CRP) on 6/16, representing the only "Eastern" warbler found in the Sacramento area this spring. Continuing from last year, multiple singing **Yellow Warblers** were detected at the "Accidental Forest" portion of CRP, and fledged young were seen getting fed by an adult; with the drought and a litany of absences, it's nice for some good news: a native bird beginning to reclaim its former nesting range in the region.

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 I want to thank the following for their reports: Max Brodie, Aidan Brubaker, Brent Campos, Lyann Comrack, Andy Englis, Gil Ewing, Jane Griffith, Scott Hoppe, Emmett Iverson, Manfred Kusch, Jeri Langham, John Luther, Mark Martucci, Michael Perrone, Nora Papian, Zane Pickus, Ron Pozzi, Jim Rowoth, Steve Scott, Sara Sweet, Jim Thomas, John Trochet, Tom Uslan, Zeke VanZante, and Bart Wickel.

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

Chris Conard



Snowy Plover by Alan Schmierer (public domain)

SAS NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome these new members.

Susan Bertoli

Lynn Daly

Kathy Keers

Ann Marie Kennedy

Glenn Lomax

Sara Morin

Lana Paulhamus

Deborah Rowlett

Juan Schulz

See the Latest SAS Action on Facebook



facebook.com/SacramentoAudubon

You can enjoy the photos and commentary without joining Facebook

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, except for June, July, and December when no meetings are held. The next meeting is August 31.

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

Field Trip Information

Due to continuing coronavirus restrictions, SAS is not currently offering field trips. Suggested places to bird according to the month can be found on page 2.

Call For Volunteers: Website Maintenance

The Website Committee is seeking volunteers to help with maintenance of the Sacramento Audubon website.

Contact webmaster@sacramentoaudubon.org for more information or to volunteer. To keep up with current happenings follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/SacramentoAudubon.

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

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

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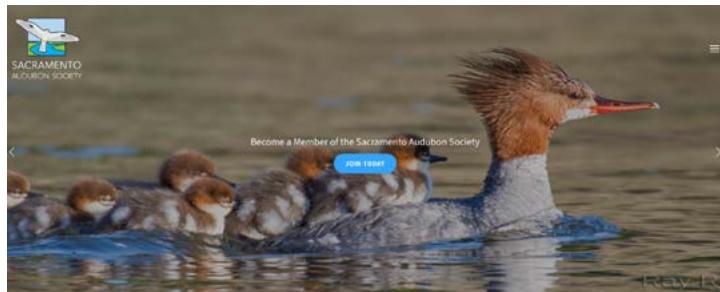
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Action Alert: Y / N

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



Latest News:



At late spring asynchrony, the temperature one and half degrees in the thermocline



From eastern California begin sprouting 500+ Year's Person's "Mature in Your



An honored member and volunteer for the Sacramento Audubon, Ken Pierce served

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White-tailed Kite Dan Brown

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Copy deadline is the 15th of the month. Send all copy to the Editor. Observations must reach the Seasonal Observations Editor by the 8th of the month.

The Observer is published by the Sacramento Audubon Society, monthly, January through December, except June and August, when we publish abbreviated editions.

Sacramento Audubon Election Results

Board Elections have closed and the new board has been approved for 2021–2022:

President: Bill Bianco

Vice President: Daphne Reimer

Treasurer: Harriet Saeck

Recording Secretary: Mary Forrestal

Corresponding Secretary: Heather White

Director: Nancy Gronert

Director: Eric Johnson

Director: Paul Miller

Director: Jane Van Kessel