

The Observer

Sacramento Audubon Society



38,000 Pounds of Trash

You can't go birding without seeing trash. Plastic bags, take-out containers, bottles, tires, shopping carts, the list goes on and on, with face masks being the latest addition to the pile. It's a waste stream in our streams, rivers, roadsides, neighborhoods, and parks. Trash is unsightly and it harms wildlife.

The magnitude of the trash problem in our area was exemplified by a recent post on the social network Nextdoor by Roland Brady. (Roland Brady is a Parkway Foundation Mile Steward and frequently posts about trash cleanups.) Roland's post described the efforts, in early October, by an inter-agency group consisting of Reclamation District 1000, the Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the American River Flood Control District. In a project lasting three days and using heavy equipment, this consortium removed 38,000 lbs. of debris from the floodplain of Steelhead

Creek between West El Camino Avenue bridge and the confluence with Arcade Creek. (The source of the trash was from multiple homeless camps in the area.)

While we'll have to leave the heavy lifting to these agencies, we can make a dent in the trash pile. The American River Parkway Foundation organizes several cleanup days per month. Sacramento Picks It Up! is a public group on Facebook that regularly organizes trash pickup days. The Sacramento Area Creeks Council's website is an excellent resource for finding organized trash pickup events, or for practicing "random acts of clean-up" with suggested neighborhoods, creeks, and parks needing attention.



nick21/Getty Images

You might even consider picking up trash while you are birding. To help you locate organized trash pickup days, SAS will be adding this activity to our Calendar of Events.
—Daphne Reimer

After the Flood

Here in mid-November, the flood from the October 24th record storm, where over five inches of rain fell in 24 hours, is still slowly receding on the Bufferlands, at Cosumnes River Preserve, and other areas of Sacramento's low floodplain. It's disorienting to recall that most of us were still in varying levels of fire anxiety just prior to the storm, but now, with some additional modest rain, the immediacy of two years of extreme drought has also receded. November 12th was the first time I was able to access large portions of the west side of the Bufferlands, and only then by wearing hip boots.

Assessing the area after a flood is always interesting and a bit foreboding. Some of you who have visited the Bufferlands may know that the flood waters of Morrison and Laguna creeks are drained by a large pumping station into the Sacramento River near Freeport, and this takes time (because of the high levees, there is no direct connection). The west side of the property is so low in the floodplain that much of it is under five feet above sea level (the post-storm flood came to about nine feet), and the bottoms of the managed seasonal wetlands are as low as three feet

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Bufferlands in flood by Chris Conard

Field Trips: Dec. 18, 2021, through January 18, 2022

Sacramento Audubon is gradually returning to volunteer-led field trips. As the pandemic continues, we have added precautions for everyone's safety. We are only offering a few field trips each month and registration is required for all participants. More field trips will be offered as we gain experience with this new way of doing things. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

COVID - 19 Protocols

- All participants must register in advance to attend. Please only sign up if you are committed to attending, as field trips have a limited number of participants.
- All participants, including field trip leaders, must be vaccinated.
- Field trip participants should maintain adequate social distance.
- There will be no sharing of binoculars, scopes or other optics on any field trips.
- Additional restrictions may be required, such as proof of vaccine or facemasks. It varies with each field trip. Please read the description of the field trip carefully. Do not register for a field trip, if you are unwilling to comply with the stated COVID precautions.
- Field trips leaders are authorized by the Sacramento Audubon Board to cancel field trips if unregistered participants attempt to join or stated precautions are not met.

Field Trip for Mobility Challenged Birders Near Sacramento

Saturday, December 18, 9 am
(Expected length: 2 hours)
Leader: Paul Miller
Maximum number of participants: 6
Registration Opens:
Noon December 1, 2021

This area south of Sacramento is beautifully designed for those with mobility challenges as it offers a wide, level cement trail that loops through the Refuge. Designed to meet a wide range of mobility needs, the facility includes handicapped parking, accessible restrooms, handicap ramp access from parking lot, and wide level concrete trails. The varied habitats may produce interesting birds, especially in the fall and winter, such as Green Heron, Sora, Belted Kingfisher, Song Sparrow, and Common Yellowthroat, as well as Red-tailed Hawks and Western Meadowlarks.

Covid Protocols: Participants will be required to adhere to COVID-19 protocols as outlined, and proof of vaccination is required upon registration.

Wildlife Refuge North of Sacramento

Saturday, January 8, 8 am
(Expected length: 6-8 hours)
Leader: Sonja Sorbo
Maximum number of participants: 6
Registration Opens:
Noon December 6, 2021

This winter trip offers fantastic opportunities to view waterfowl, and it's one of the more reliable places near Sacramento to see Blue-winged Teal. Sometimes thousands of geese take flight over the water to the delight of birders. Other species to expect for the day include passerines, wetland birds, and raptors. We will spend some time walking the trails which are all well graded and on level ground. After lunch, we'll take a drive around the auto loop. If there's time, and if the group agrees, we'll drive home to Sacramento via a different route looking for Sandhill Cranes, grassland birds, and raptors. A CDFW Lands Pass is required by the refuge. Details will be provided upon registration.

Covid Protocols: Participants will be required to adhere to COVID-19 protocols as outlined.

To Register for a Field Trip:

1. Visit www.sacramentoaudubon.org/field-trips - Field trips that are open for registration will have "Registration Open" in the title. Select the field trip by clicking on the picture or title.
2. Select the field trip that you wish to register for by clicking on the photo or title. This will open a new page for that field trip.
3. Scroll to the bottom of the new page and fill in your name and email address.
4. You will be sent an email by our Registration Coordinator within 48 hours. The first participants to register will be sent an email with meeting location and directions. Remaining registrants will be added to a waiting list.
5. Please let us know as soon as possible if you will not be able to attend, we have a waiting list for most field trips.

If registration for a field trip is marked as full, this means the field trip and waiting list are full.

If you have questions or need help, email our Registration Coordinator at sacramentoaudubonfieldtrips@gmail.com.

North Natomas

Saturday, January 15, 8 am – Noon
Leader: Ben Graber
Maximum number of participants: 6
Registration Opens:
Noon December 13, 2021

Join Ben for a leisurely morning walk. We can expect to see a wide variety of grassland species including Meadowlarks, Ring-necked Pheasants, and Savannah Sparrows, along with herons, egrets, and waterfowl. Various wintering species of raptors, including falcons, are also possibilities. This trip will include approximately 2 to 3 miles of walking over flat terrain, and bringing liquids is recommended. This is a great trip for both beginning and more experienced birders.

Covid Protocols: Participants will be required to adhere to COVID-19 protocols as outlined and proof of vaccination is required upon registration.

River Tour

Tuesday, January 18, 8 am
(Expected length: 2-2 1/2 hours)
Leader: Darrell Mohr
Maximum number of participants: 8
Registration Opens:
Noon December 13, 2021

On this morning river tour, you will see and hear a nice variety of resident and wintering birds. Possibilities include Phainopepla and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. Goldeneye and mergansers should be on the water. This is a great trip for beginning and more experienced birders. A Sac County Park Pass or \$5 entry fee is required for all vehicles.

Covid Protocols: Participants will be required to adhere to COVID-19 protocols as outlined.



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
photo by Becky Matsubara

Bobelaine News

Besides trail trimming and mowing, volunteers have been busy with the removal of Red Sesbania, Poke weed, Fig trees, and Verbascum at Bobelaine. John Williams has been a great help in plant identification. Taylor Florence with volunteer help has been installing Wood Duck nest boxes around portions of Lake Crandall.

Thank you, to all the Bobelaine volunteers. *William Bianco*



Bill and Taylor installing Wood Duck box, photo by Fred Turner



Steve, John, Bill and others resting after re-emerging from the thick where they were removing sesbania. photo by Fred Turner

After the Flood *continued from page 1*



Ring-necked Duck by Chris Conard



Cooper's Hawk drying out by Chris Conard

below sea level. This bowl is filled by flooding and can take weeks to go down. When the water is high, it even connects with the Delta. The concerns upon checking range from whether the berms, valves, weirs, and roads survived the flood, avoiding sinkholes hidden beneath the remaining flood waters (I've gone for a few unintended swims over the years), and seeing how horrible the flood of new trash from upstream dumping in the creeks is going to be.

And of course, the birds and wildlife adapt out of necessity, and take advantage of new conditions where they can. The few features on the property that had water prior to the storm were being heavily used by

ducks and waterbirds. After the storm, they cleared out to newly flooded areas. But as large areas were newly flooded, the first flocks of diving ducks arrived, with nearly 200 Ring-necked Ducks, a few Canvasbacks, Lesser Scaup, Buffleheads, and Ruddy Ducks. I saw my first Short-billed Gull (formerly Mew Gull) for the season, also checking out the new conditions. A huge dead catfish (about 28") was an interesting find. Less welcome than a dead fish were used hypodermic needles washed downstream and flood damage to roads around the wetland cells that will need to be repaired next season. Like the birds, there's no choice but to take what the flood provides, good and bad, and proceed.

—Chris Conard

Seasonal Sightings October 1 to October 31

After a birdy September, interesting reports continued into October. The starkness of the multiyear drought was mitigated by unprecedented rains on 10/24, breaking records throughout the region, with over five inches on a single day in Sacramento and even more in nearby locations. Three **Surf Scoters** at Folsom Lake were quite early in the season for the area, where they are rare at any time except, perhaps, in the Delta. These were seen from Folsom Point on 10/14-15. A **Red-breasted Merganser** (female-type) was a nice find at the Woodland WTP on 10/31, continuing the next day. There have been very few reports of migrating **Common Poorwills** the past two falls; the only one this year was seen at Babel Slough on 10/18.

One of the most exciting recent finds was a **Broad-winged Hawk** that spent the morning of 10/3 up and downstream of the Gristmill access to the American River Parkway. It was a first for Sacramento County and one of very few in the Valley. The only **Short-eared Owl** report so far this fall was from the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area on 10/30. **Lewis's Woodpeckers** continued in good numbers at sites on the flats of the Valley, such as Cosumnes River Preserve, in addition to having good showings at their usual wintering areas in oak woodlands and savanna on the edges of the Valley.

A **Cassin's Kingbird** was an excellent find south of the Rd 103 Pond on 10/1. It or another was found later in the month, on 10/29 through early November, at the Davis Cemetery and Arboretum. There were a fair number of **Hammond's Flycatchers** reported this month from multiple locations. An **American Dipper** returned to its typical location near the Hwy 128 bridge over Putah Creek, west of Winters, on 10/7. The only **Evening Grosbeak** reported was a

flyover from Orangevale on 10/28. A late **Grasshopper Sparrow** was a nice find, photographed along Meiss Rd on 10/16. A **Northern Waterthrush** was found along Putah Creek at the Hwy 128 dipper spot from 10/21-23. **Magnolia Warbler** reports are always a pleasant surprise, and one was found on private property in the small Capay Valley town of Guinda on 10/7. A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was found at Elkhorn Regional Park in Yolo County on 10/2-4, with another at Lake Solano Park on 10/6, where a male **Black-throated Blue Warbler** had been reported on 10/5.

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: Lisa Bach, Terry Berger, Max Brodie, Aidan Brubaker, Diane Colborn, Lyann Comrack, Lily Douglas, Konshau Duman, Gil Ewing, Cliff Hawley, Jim Holmes, Scott Hoppe, Emmett Iverson, Jeri Langham, Mark Martucci, Michael Perrone, Zane Pickus, Eric Pilotte, Jim Rowth, Steve Scott, Cameron Tescher, Jim Thomas, John Trochet, Bart Wickel, and Lynette Williams. Thanks to everyone for their reports—without them, this column would not be possible.

—Chris Conard

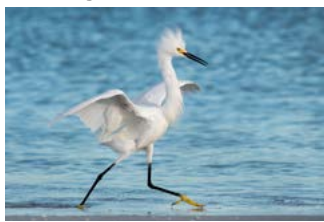
Critical Migratory Bird Protections Restored by Biden-Harris Administration

Longstanding Migratory Bird Treaty Act protections will be reinstated and a key process to strengthen the rules now begins.

"Birds will be safer in this country thanks to the leadership of the Biden-Harris administration," said Dr. Elizabeth Gray, president and acting CEO, National Audubon Society. "Reinstating these protections will restore decades of bipartisan precedent. The newly announced plans to strengthen the century-old law are a welcome and necessary step to address the loss of three billion birds in North America."

The Biden-Harris administration announced a final rule today which will revoke the previous administration's gutting of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The administration also published an intent to establish a new authorization program and clarification of these longstanding protections.

In January of this year, the Trump administration finalized a change that limited the MBTA's protections only to activities that purposefully kill birds, exempting all industrial hazards from enforcement. Any "incidental" death—no matter how inevitable,



Snowy Egret photo by Mellisa James, Audubon Photography Awards

avoidable or devastating to birds—became immune from enforcement under the law. If this change had been in place in 2010, BP would have faced no consequences under the MBTA for the more than one million birds killed in the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

"Over the last century the MBTA has been critical to protecting birds, including spurring the recovery of the Snowy Egret, the Sandhill Crane, the Wood Duck, and more," said Erik Schneider, policy manager, National Audubon Society. "Birds are telling us they are in trouble, and with their protections returning, we must now strengthen the MBTA for the future."

New science has revealed the loss of 3 billion birds in North America since 1970 and that two-thirds of birds are at risk of extinction due to climate change. Just today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service just announced 11 bird species are now considered extinct.

In light of these alarming reports, the National Audubon Society is advocating for policy proposals that will Bring Birds Back, including a multi-front approach to reinstate the longstanding interpretation of this foundational law and enhance its implementation. —Audubon

Thank You For Your Generous Donations!

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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.

SAS NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome these new members:

Tracy Archipley

Michele Dodge

R. M. Fratti

Camille Hill

Kenneth Keenan

Deborah Versteegh

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 January 25, 2022. Minutes of Board Meetings can be found online at sacramentoaudubon.org/board-minutes.

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.

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: \$ _____

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

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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 membership@sacramentoaudubon.org.

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

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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.

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Field Trips Have Resumed

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Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
photo by Becky Matsubara