



The Observer

Sacramento Audubon Society

February General Meeting

Thursday, February 17, 2022 at 7pm via Zoom

The February meeting will be held online via Zoom. You must register for the meeting, but there is no cost to register and you do not need a Zoom account. Registration is required due to space limitations set by Zoom. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with information on how to join the meeting. You will also receive email reminders about this event.

For more information visit www.sacramentoaudubon.org/monthly-speaker.

The Birding Capital

A nature photographer's exploration of bird life across Sacramento and its regional parks

Presented by Jamieson Scott

Sacramento has an extraordinarily rich and under appreciated natural heritage! Join Jamieson Scott, environmental scientist and professional nature photographer, to explore what makes our Capital a world class city for birding.

We'll leave no stone unturned as we consider even the smallest open spaces and, of course, the larger regional national wildlife refuges. The presentation will feature Jamieson's nature photography, videography, bird lists and general advice about what to watch for.

We'll engage and answer questions throughout the presentation, as well as in Q&A session afterwards. You are invited to share your favorite bird photos for our collective enjoyment and discussion.



Photo by Jamieson Scott

2022 Audubon Photography Awards Open for Entries

The 2022 Audubon Photography Awards are officially open for entries! The 2022 Audubon Photography Awards entry period runs from 12pm ET on Wednesday, January 12 through Wednesday, March 9 at 12pm ET.

Judges will award eight prizes to photographers and videographers: the Grand Prize, Professional Prize, Amateur Prize, Youth Prize, Plants for Birds Prize, Fisher Prize, Female Bird Prize, and Video Prize.

For the second year, Audubon will award the Female Bird Prize and the Video Prize. The Female Bird Prize continues to showcase the beauty of female birds, which are often underappreciated and under-researched in both birding and science. The Video Prize once again will be awarded to the top video of birds demonstrating unique behaviors or highlighting bird life in its habitat <http://audubonphotoawards.org>



Sandhill Cranes. Photo: Robin Ulery/Audubon Photography Awards

Field Trips: February 17 to March 16, 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 trip leaders are authorized by the Sacramento Audubon Board to cancel field trips if unregistered participants attempt to join or stated precautions are not met.

Wildlife Refuge North of Sacramento trip for Mobility Challenged Birders

Friday, February 18, 10:00 AM
Expected length: 4 hours
Leader: Paul Miller
Maximum number of participants: 6
Registration Opens: noon January 24

This winter trip offers those with mobility challenges, including wheelchair users, a fantastic opportunity to view waterfowl. This wildlife area is one of the more reliable places near Sacramento to see Blue-winged Teal. Handicapped parking and a fully accessible restroom are provided. 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 begin the day traveling an accessible trail. This one-mile paved trail meanders along wetlands with several viewing platforms. After lunch, we'll take a drive around the auto loop. This time of year brings cold damp weather, so be prepared. An entrance pass is required. Details will be provided upon registration.

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

Wildlife Preserve South of Sacramento

Saturday, February 26, 8:00 AM
Expected length: up to 5-6 hours
Leader: Rodd Kelsey
Maximum number of participants: 8
Registration Opens: noon January 24

On this trip we will explore several parts of the publicly accessible and private areas on this preserve, covering habitats like managed wetlands, flooded farm fields, sloughs and floodplains, and gallery valley oak forest. This will give us great opportunities to see a nice diversity of water birds and land birds, including many waterfowl and shorebirds, the remaining sandhill cranes who have not yet begun their journey north, wintering songbirds, raptors, and possibly some owls. On the recent Christmas Bird Count, over 90 species were observed. This trip will also be a great way to wander around both the well-known and lesser-known parts of the area to learn about the ongoing work there to restore natural floodplains, reintroduce fire, and managed wetlands and farmlands for the greatest wildlife benefit. This trip will involve a significant amount of walking along roads and trails, including on some uneven ground. If rains have continued, there will likely be muddy and wet conditions.

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
2. Select a field trip by clicking on the picture or title of the trip. This will open a new webpage. At the top of the new page, it will indicate if registration for the field trip is open, closed, or coming up.
3. If registration is open, scroll to the bottom of the page and fill in your name and email address and click the "Register Now" button.
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.

Wildlife Refuge North of Sacramento trip for Mobility-Challenged Birders

Thursday, March 3, 10:00 AM.
Expected length: 4 hours
Leader: Paul Miller
Maximum number of participants: 6
Registration Opens: noon February 7

This winter trip offers those with mobility challenges, including wheelchair users, a fantastic opportunity to view waterfowl. This refuge north of Sacramento provides nearly 70,000 acres of wetland, grassland, and riparian habitats for a wide array of waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, waterbirds, songbirds, reptiles, and mammals. It currently supports nearly 300 species of birds.

Handicapped parking and a fully accessible restroom are provided. We will begin the day traveling the ADA walking trail. This two-mile paved fully accessible trail meanders along wetlands with several viewing platforms. After lunch, we'll take a drive around the auto loop. Join Paul for a full day of exploring this diverse area and bring liquids, lunch, and FRS radios if you have them. A CDFW Lands Pass is required. Details will be provided upon registration.

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

Ecological Preserve near Oroville

Thursday, March 10, 9:00 AM
Expected length: 6-8 hours
Leader: Sonja Sorbo

Maximum number of participants: 8
Registration Opens: noon February 7
This amazing area north of Oroville is a result of ancient volcanic activity which created an elevated basalt mesa. The reserve is known for its spectacular wildflower displays in springtime. There are several seasonal waterfalls and streams which add further beauty to the landscape. Our adventure will be about the hiking and wildflower viewing as much as the birding. The plan is to hike to a waterfall about 3.7 miles out and back, with an elevation gain of about 320 feet. The trail is generally in good condition, but it can get rocky, and any recent rain may result in some muddy areas. We can expect to see resident bird species of open land and oak woodland, including up to four wren species and four swallow species, Western Bluebirds, Western Meadowlarks, sparrows, woodpeckers, goldfinches, California Quail, and raptors. If we're lucky, we might spot an early migrant or two. Wear sturdy hiking shoes or boots, and bring plenty of water as well as snacks, lunch, sunscreen, and hats. There is very little shade on the trail. Participants should be in good physical condition for this moderately difficult hike. Rain backup date is Wednesday March 16, 2022.

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

Field Trip Reports

As we slowly return to birding in group field trips, we look forward to the time we can offer our usual 3 trips per week. In this time period we had only two trips, including a new Birdability walk, Sacramento Audubon's first birding trip in over two years.

Gray Lodge Wildlife Refuge

(1/8) - Leader Sonja Sorbo reported:

Winter is a fantastic time for birding in the Central Valley and our day rally of 78 species underscores this. The weather was perfect — crisp, sunny and calm. From the Gray Lodge entrance, the Sutter Buttes looked almost magical, with gauzy clouds draping craggy peaks that appeared to be covered with green velvet. The waterfowl were in fine form, inspired by sunlight sparkling on the water. As they paddled around, we enjoyed viewing all three teal species, **Common Goldeneye**, **Lesser Scaup**, **Ruddy Ducks**, **Northern Pintail**, **Northern Shovelers**, **Gadwall**, **American Wigeon**, and **Mallards**.



Loggerhead Shrike, photo by Trish Gussler

At one point, thousands of **Snow Geese** took off and flew overhead; the cacophony was wonderful. While looking upwards, we noted **Greater White-fronted Geese** and **Sandhill Cranes** as well, heading for parts unknown. In contrast to the plethora of waterfowl, shorebirds were somewhat sparse. The roster included numerous **Killdeer**, a couple dozen **Black-necked Stilts**, 5 or 6 **Greater Yellowlegs**, and a lone **Long-billed Dowitcher** who looked rather pitiful amid a cluster of snoozing ducks on a mudflat.

Raptors were out in force, no doubt happy to be hunting in sunshine instead of hunkering down in rain. There were easily a dozen **Red-tailed Hawks** on the refuge, a couple of **Red-shouldered Hawks**, an **American Kestrel**, **Cooper's Hawk**, and three **Bald Eagles** (no, I'm not kidding). To further entertain us, a **Peregrine Falcon** sat on a mud island looking fat and sassy, no doubt having recently feasted on a feathered victim.

As for the non-aquatic species, sparrows took the prize for the most numerous (**White-crowned** and **Golden-crowned**), followed by **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**, **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, **Bushtits**, and **Dark-eyed Juncos**. Four different woodpecker species were spotted; our favorite was an adorable male **Downy Woodpecker** who delighted the photographers in the group by perching on nearby berry bushes just a few feet off the ground. Meanwhile, on the back side of the berry bushes some **California Quail** scuttled around, and a **Bewick's Wren** scolded us for no apparent reason. After a terrific few hours at Gray Lodge, we drove "the long way" home westward around the Sutter Buttes. At West Buttes Road junction we were pleasantly surprised to see a **Loggerhead Shrike**, four **Sandhill Cranes**, a **Belted Kingfisher**, and a juvenile **Bald Eagle**, who looked positively enormous compared to the **Red-tailed Hawk** which was buzzing it. We were taken aback by a huge group of **Killdeer** that went whizzing past over a flooded field; we counted about 100! Our final treat of the day was a **Great Horned Owl** who spooked out of a tree but promptly returned and grudgingly posed for photos.

Gray Lodge is truly a treasure!

Stone Lakes Wildlife Refuge, a Birdability walk

(12/18) - Leader Paul Miller reported:

This trip, while open to all birders, was specifically created for mobility challenged birders, including those in wheelchairs. Four enthusiastic bird lovers joined me on a very chilly 26 degree foggy morning. We



Black-necked Stilt, photo by Paul Miller



Paul with Birdability walk participants

observed/heard 27 wonderful species. The morning started as **Sandhill Cranes** flew in low and loud, and appeared angelic in the foggy sky. Flocks of **Greater White-fronted Geese**, **American White Pelicans**, and **Tundra Swans** flew both overhead and in the distance. **Song Sparrows**, **Common Yellowthroat** and **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** kept us company adjacent to the path. Cold fluffy **Red-tailed Hawks** kept watch from the power line towers. The adjacent wetlands held **Black-necked Stilts**, **Northern Shovelers**, **Mallards**, **Greater Yellowlegs**, and **Long-billed Dowitchers**. Throughout the day the song of the **Western Meadowlark** floated in the fog. Highlighting this magnificent diverse group of birds was a **Loggerhead Shrike**, just hanging out in the parking lot!

Our next Birdability walk will be at a Wildlife Area on February 18th. Registration information is on page 2; the trip is open to all birders and participants are welcome regardless of their birding experience. I encourage you to reach out with this information to those you know who are mobility challenged or use a wheelchair. All these trips will be at areas fully accessible trails, with handicapped parking and accessible restrooms.

25 Years and Counting

About halfway into my 25th year at the Bufferlands, participation in the Rio Cosumnes Christmas Bird Count (CBC) and looking at our historical data, provides an occasion to assess what's going on at the Bufferlands and in the region. On January 3, 2022, seven Bufferlands staff and four volunteers participated in the 26th running of the count. It was great to resume this tradition, with precautions, after last year's count was canceled because of Covid-19. The Bufferlands is at the northwestern portion of the 15-mile diameter CBC circle that includes Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, Cosumnes River Preserve, western Elk Grove, northwestern Galt, and a portion of Merritt Island in Yolo County. We recorded 109 species on the Bufferlands and the Sacramento Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant (totaling about 3,500 acres), within a historical range of 90 to 120, and counted 77,094 birds (60,000 were European Starlings), within a historical range of 7,723 to 811,644 (again, mostly starlings). The cumulative total is 163 species found on the Bufferlands over the count's 26 years. New for us this time were a Western Grebe and a Semipalmated Plover.

Large numbers of Snow Geese and Greater White-fronted Geese have been increasing in the past ten years and that trend continued. Diving ducks on Upper Beach Lake have long been a Bufferlands hallmark, though numbers have been pretty modest in recent years. For the first time since 2008, we had 2,000 Canvasbacks as well as a count record of 7,002 Ring-necked Ducks. Wild Turkeys were first recorded on our portion of the count in 2003, but are now up to an impressive 463, just down from last count's record high. We had only four Ring-necked Pheasants, down from a staggering high of over 400 in 1996; this species is declining throughout the region. Perhaps an echo of the recent drought years, we missed several species that have been declining on the property: American Bittern, Green Heron (found count week), and Common Gallinule. Raptor numbers were low, with some species (White-tailed Kite and Northern Harrier) alarmingly so. Some of this may relate to the evolving character of the landscape. Open space has been lost surrounding

the property, but the Bufferlands has changed significantly too. It is much more forested than it was 20 years ago, which is a good thing to a large extent, but there are winners and losers when it comes to localized habitat needs. Despite steep declines in Sacramento County and the region, Burrowing Owls are (barely?) holding on, with four recorded on count day.

Other notable observations included an impressive 422 Mourning Doves, with an early morning flyout from a roost in sandbar willows of over 250. We missed Black-bellied Plovers for the tenth count in a row; gone are the days when we could find up to 1,000 roosting. Loss of foraging in the surrounding areas as ag lands fill in might be the cause. Two species that have declined since 2005 when West Nile Virus arrived in our area, Yellow-billed Magpie (60 this year) and Loggerhead Shrike (eight), showed encouraging and somewhat surprising increases. Common Ravens (7) and Say's Phoebes (17) both set count records. The latter is one of the few open country/grassland species that is not declining regionally, and it also bred on the property for the first time in 2021. Western Bluebirds were way up, with 24 being a new record; they have only been regular on the property since 2014. Golden-crowned Sparrows (202) outnumbered White-crowned Sparrows (190) for the first time; maturing habitat may favor Golden-crowned Sparrows. Lastly, a single Golden-crowned Kinglet and a single Varied Thrush were both unexpected in a winter season when these somewhat irruptive species have been scarce. More background on the Rio Cosumnes CBC and other counts in the Central Valley can be found at the Central Valley Bird Club webpage (<http://www.cvbirds.org/bulletin/downloads/volume-09/>).

—Chris Conard



Varied Thrush,
photo by Chris Conard

Seasonal Sightings December 1 to December 31

Not that long ago, reports of **Trumpeter Swans** were pretty rare. It now seems that there are always a few about to be found, and fortunately there are some people who are willing to search through tens of thousands of **Tundra Swans** to find them. On 12/7, there were at least 4 **Trumpeter Swans** (two adults and two juveniles) at the east end of Sankey Rd in southern Sutter County. The female **Long-tailed Duck** found on 11/26 near the Nimbus Hatchery continued into January. Most views were rather brief as the bird repeatedly dove below the Hazel Ave bridge, spending more time underwater than on the surface. A female-type **Red-breasted Merganser** from 12/2-9 was a first for the Sacramento County Bufferlands. With increased reports of **Neotropic Cormorants** in southeastern California and then into the Central Valley, it was only a matter of time for Sacramento County's first. One of these smaller, relatively longer-tailed cormorants was found on 12/31 among a group of **Double-crested Cormorants** along Brannan Island Rd at the junction of the San Joaquin River and Seven Mile Slough. It continued in the area and was seen by many into January. A **Pacific Golden-Plover**

found on 12/5 was a nice find at Cosumnes River Preserve (CRP). Out-of-season **Semipalmated Plovers** included one at Staten Island on 12/2 and one at the Sacramento Regional WTP on 12/20-22. **Mountain Plovers** continued in ag fields along Hwy 45 in Yolo County, just south of the Colusa County line. On 12/16, two **Pacific Loons** were found on Folsom Lake, seen from Folsom Point, while **Common Loons** were surprisingly hard to come by this season. This month produced a nice assortment of uncommon to rare flycatchers. A **Hammond's Flycatcher** spent the month at Reichmuth Park, and a **Gray Flycatcher** returned to winter at CRP. A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was also found at the EC Garden on the UC Davis campus on 12/7-16, and a **Dusky Flycatcher** at CRP on 12/11 was quite a surprise. The most cooperative rare flycatcher was an **Eastern Phoebe** at the southern tip of Tyler Island, continuing from 12/12 into January. Two **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** that spent the month at the Nimbus Fish Hatchery were a nice surprise, while **Chipping Sparrows** were hard to come by after being quite regular in recent winters. The **Black-and-white Warbler**

found at Reichmuth Park on 11/20-21 was re-found on 12/4 and continued through at least 12/11.

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, Lyann Comrack, Konshau Duman, Gil Ewing, Cliff Hawley, Jim Holmes, Liam Huber, Emmett Iverson, Jeri Langham, Andrew Lee, Mark Martucci, Nora Papian, Michael Perrone, Jim Rowoth, Steve Scott, John Trochet, and Lynette Williams. Thanks to everyone for their reports--without them, this column would not be possible.

—Chris Conard

Thank You For Your Generous Donations!

General Fund

Eric Bailey, Jon Beck, Bill Bianco, Charles Binder, Bruce Bostick, Karen Brookhyser, Robert & Maureen Burness, Elissa Callman, Betty J. Cooper, Jane Churchon, Dale Claypoole, Carol Edwards, Kim Erickson, Taylor Florence Lani Fuzessery, Rowland Gaal, Vickie J. Griffin, Pamela Herlihy, Larry Hickey, Christine K. Holmstrom, Richard & Mary Howard, Maria Nicholas Kelly, Alice Krumenacher, Len & Rita Marowitz, Brian Miller, Rosemary & Robert Mundhenk, Arthur & Linnea Osborne *in honor of Debbie & Ted Hauptert*, Gibbe & Ann Parsons, John Payne & Peggy Cranston, Paul & Tracie Ramsey, Beverly Sales, Jennifer Schmidt, Julia Seabourn, Julia Sheldon, Jane Steele, Daniel & Pam Thompson, Prem Turner, Timothy Vendlinski

Education and Conservation Fund

Carolyn J. Bertoni
Lucy Boehm
Karen Brookhyser
Dennis & Meg Bryerton
Elliot Chasin & Reanna Wights
Valerie Chenoweth
Carol Edwards
Heather Fargo
Susan Goodrich
Kathryn M. Griffin
Christine K. Holmstrom
Richard & Mary Howard
Martha Lennihan
Craig Swolgaard

Bobelaine Sanctuary

Bill Bianco
Yvonne Bishop
Karen Brookhyser
Valerie Chenoweth
Carol Edwards
Richard & Mary Howard
Martha Lennihan
Nancee Murray

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 NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome these new members:

Cintia Calevoso	Paul & Tracie
Paul Comiskey	Ramsey
Mike Finta	Marianne Robbins
Lani Fuzessery	Greg Rodrigues
Alisa Heffernan	Marian Sawyer
Rebecca Kuzins	Kathleen Sonesen
Emily Menacher	Prem Turner
Nancee Murray	
Shari Nichelini	
The Prowell	
Family	

Sacramento Audubon Chapter Board Meetings

Please contact President, Bill Bianco, at president@sacramentoaudubon.org; 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 at sacramentoaudubon.org/board-minutes.

JOIN THE SACRAMENTO AUDUBON SOCIETY

Your membership supports the SAS mission of conservation, environmental education and protection of the region's natural ecosystems and diverse wildlife populations. Members receive our online newsletter, *The Observer*; so be sure to include your email address.

Sacramento Audubon Society Membership Application

www.sacramentoaudubon.org

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

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

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

Total Enclosed \$ _____

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

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

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Tel _____

Email _____

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 _____.

Sacramento Audubon Society is a 501(c)3 non-profit. #94-1615830

Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.

Sacramento Audubon Society
P.O. Box 160694
Sacramento, CA 95816

Nonprofit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Permit #1827
Sacramento, CA

Address Correction Requested

Dated Material: Please Expedite Delivery



SACRAMENTO
AUDUBON SOCIETY

www.sacramentoaudubon.org
facebook.com/SacramentoAudubon



White-tailed Kite Dan Brown

Sacramento Audubon Society Information

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

Internet Address: www.sacramentoaudubon.org

Membership/Subscriptions: Jane Van Kessel
membership@sacramentoaudubon.org
P.O. Box 160694, Sacramento, CA 95816-0694

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

Program Chair: Anthony Asay, e-mail: cend86@gmail.com

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

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

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

February Events: Mark your calendars

Field trips (see page 2 for details):

Friday, February 18

Saturday, February 26

Thursday, March 3

Thursday, March 10

General Meeting Thursday, February 17, via Zoom

The Birding Capital

A nature photographer's exploration of bird life across Sacramento and its regional parks, presented by Jamieson Scott.



Jamieson Scott