

The Observer

Sacramento Audubon Society



Infrastructure Funding Could Bring Hope to North America's Largest Ecosystem

An update on efforts to build a better future for the Greater Sage-Grouse and Sagebrush Country

As we move into the dry summer months the threat of fire looms over the sagebrush steppe ecosystem, an area covering 14 states and three Canadian provinces. This western landscape – the backdrop of many iconic cowboy movies - is home to recreation, hunting, grazing, various industries, and more than 350 species of conservation concern. Among these is the Greater Sage-Grouse, a long relied upon indicator species that has been in serious decline across its 11-state range. Just last year, two pivotal reports were released that grabbed the attention of elected officials and land managers, raising concern about the future of this biologically important ecosystem and the risk of an Endangered Species Act listing. The first, from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), found that Greater Sage-Grouse populations have dropped more than 80 percent range-wide since 1965, with a 37 percent decline since 2002.

More troubling news came in a report from the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA), which coordinated with the USGS, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to examine a wide range of threats to the sagebrush ecosystem that have resulted in the staggering loss of wildlife habitat. Among those threats were wildfires, which have raged larger, hotter, and more frequent due to the spread of invasive grasses. Between 2000 and 2018 wildfires have burned more than 15 million acres of sagebrush habitat (approximately the size of West Virginia), on public land alone.

The 2021 passage of the bipartisan funding bill, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (“IIJA”), offers real hope for the bird and



Greater Sage-Grouse. Photo: Evan Barrientos/Audubon

sagebrush country. The Department of the Interior, specifically the BLM and USFWS, received hundreds of millions of dollars for ecosystem restoration and wildlife risk reductions. Western Congressional leaders from both sides of the aisle have recognized the opportunity presented by this funding source, coming together to ask Department of the Interior leadership to invest IIJA money into the sagebrush steppe ecosystem.

Their letter highlights the increasing awareness of the need to restore this landscape and prevent more devastating wildfires. Also, the IIJA funding could create local jobs to spur this conservation effort, building more robust local rural economies with new opportunities in restoration and fire prevention. These efforts will be essential in order to control invasive species like cheatgrass, which overtake native sagebrush and have exacerbated fire risks across the region and strained local resources.

Audubon and partners from other conservation organizations are echoing the call from these

Members of Congress and urging the administration to direct these investments to the future of this critical landscape. Working with States, Tribal Nations, and local communities to realize a better future for sagebrush country will also benefit the bird and the wide range of other wildlife that depend on a healthy sagebrush country.

Multi-state conservation plans for Greater Sage-Grouse were put in place in 2015 after a historic science-based, landscape-scale collaborative effort. In 2019, the Trump administration attempted to weaken the plan's protections for the bird's

habitat, despite strong opposition from Audubon and its members. The courts ultimately blocked these rollbacks. Last year, the Bureau of Land Management announced it would reinstate the historic plans established in 2015 by stakeholders from across the West.

In February, Audubon alongside other groups, submitted comments to the Bureau of Land Management asking the agency to review these plans based on new science and growing climate change concerns. More than 20,000 Audubon members submitted their own comments to the agency.

As the manager of the majority of the bird's habitat, the outcome of the BLM plans and financial resources dedicated to improving the health of sagebrush country will play an important role in determining the bird's future. As an indicator species, improving the future for Greater Sage-Grouse populations also means realizing a better outcome for North America's largest ecosystem, and all that depend on it.

—National Audubon Society

Remembering Jack Wilburn

Some years ago, Jack Wilburn, legendary birder and ace photographer—long before everyone seemed to be photographing birds and nature—hung up his camera and his binoculars and started raising racing pigeons. It was seen by many who knew him as quite a loss to birding and other birders, but Jack always knew what he wanted to do and did it with enthusiasm. His last years were spent raising and racing his pigeons on the hill-top he shared with his wife, Phyllis, near Shingle Springs.

Jack died in their home on April 30 at 91 years of age. He and Phyllis were married for 44 years. In the late 70's and early 80's, long before it was fashionable, they traveled full time with their travel trailer throughout the US and Canada, birdwatching and taking photographs, before returning to this area full time.

Although Jack started his career as an engineer, he left that field to return to Sacramento State and obtain a Master's Degree in Biology. After that, he taught extension courses in Natural History, and wrote a weekly nature column in the *Sacramento Bee* for 11 years. Many of those essays were incorporated into a wonderful book titled "Wild Animals of California and The West: Mountains & Desert."

Teaching was central to his life for many years and a surprising number of the Valley's best birders knew Jack way back when, and learned from him not just about birds and photography but also about wild creatures of all kinds. These are some of their words. —*Maureen Geiger*

Jack was my nature photography and natural history mentor. We traveled together, photographing all forms of wild subjects, birds mostly. Such great memories from trips to Arizona, Texas, Florida, and Alaska! He taught me just about everything I know about nature photography, pre-digital. Tim Fitzer and I traveled from California to Florida via Arizona and southern Texas with Jack. We were hauling an Airstream trailer, 50 mph the whole way! What a great trip!

I also spent 8 days in Denali National Park with Jack, photographing wildlife every day! On this trip, we had a few long travel days and during one, Jack told me he had memorized a poem and proceeded to recite it....for what seemed to be 30 minutes!! Jack was a great person and a genius, IMO.

Dan Brown



Jack was one of the most knowledgeable men I ever met. There was hardly a subject that would stump him. I spent 3 weeks with Jack and Dan Brown on a road trip from Sacramento to Southeast Arizona, Texas Rio Grande Valley, Gulf Coast, High Island, Big Thicket, on to Florida Everglades and out to Key West. What a trip! Jack said he would pick up food for the trip which consisted of Dinty Moore Beef Stew, some kind of cracker that would choke you without lots of water and Progresso Vegetable Soup. I have never touched either since!

One day in south Texas we went on a walk and a father and his young son, maybe 10, walked with us. The young boy saw a small snake and said, "Get a stick and kill that snake!" Jack immediately began to educate the boy about how snakes are important in nature. By the time he finished, that boy wanted to find more snakes so he could learn all about them from Jack. I am sure that boy has a completely changed attitude about nature and all its critters, probably teaches life science at some school or college. Jack surely changed minds and lives all his life and will be missed by his many friends. Rest In Peace, Jack.

Tim Fitzer

It is always a grievous moment when someone you have known for over 50 years passes from this earth. And thus it is with Jack Wilburn's passing on April 30th. He and his close friend, the late Walt Luke, were guiding lights to me when I arrived in Sacramento in 1969. Jack and Walt ignited my interest in bird photography

for which I am ever grateful. Jack and Walt were instrumental in establishing the Woodfords Christmas Count Circle centered in Alpine County.

Jack was a consummate naturalist and a patient teacher in the field. He led many field trips for Sacramento Audubon, wrote many natural history columns for the *Sacramento Bee*, and his photographs have appeared in many publications. As film photography gave way to digital photography, Jack's interests shifted to raising pigeons and racing pigeons became his focus. He was a master in this endeavor as well. He will be greatly missed by many. He was my friend.

Ed Harper

As I get older, it is more difficult to remember what happened 50 years ago. I was very sad to learn that I would never again get to talk with my long-time friend Jack Wilburn and thank him for all he contributed to my early years of birding. I am fairly sure I met Jack before I became a birder in 1975. In the fall of 1970, I taught some night extension classes for K-12 teachers. Jack was a great naturalist and accompanied me on weekend field trips since he knew so much more and added great information that made these outings fun and great learning experiences. He was also teaching an extension course, so I joined his trips to add plant information...what a team!

In 1975, I took an introductory Ornithology class at American River College and Jack and

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Remembering Jack Wilburn *continued from page 2*

Phyllis were my tutors for many years. I specifically remember how Jack laughed when I told him I had not added Orange-crowned Warbler to my life list because I never saw a yellowish bird with an orange crown. One year, they parked their trailer in front of my home and learned I was doing a big year and did not have Spotted Owl. On December 31st they took me to a park, and it became my lifer and last species of the big year! Jack, Phyllis and I shared trips to vagrant traps like Point Reyes during migration to search for lifers for me. We also enjoyed times recounting birding outings and special birds while in his hot tub after long hours in the field.

When I began leading my Grand California VENT tour, our must stop was early morning on our way to Lake Tahoe to enjoy the myriads of hummingbirds coming to their nectar feeders and the Lawrence's Goldfinches coming to some of their flowers. My VENT participants enjoyed placing a finger on each side of the hummingbird perches and waiting for hummers to gently land on them. As the years passed Jack moved from actively birding to raising and racing homing pigeons. He so proudly would show us his special cages and how they worked to time the return of pigeons during races.

I will never forget this "mountain man" who contributed so much to my life over so many decades...he was one of a kind!

Jeri Langham

I was just looking for general nature info when I took Jack's class at Sac State, and he turned me into a birder. But he was not only a birder; on his field trips he would turn over a large rock or log and talk about all the creepy crawly things living below. He knew the plants and animals as well as the birds. He once came on a field trip that I led to Calaveras Big Trees State Park. We usually saw Pileated Woodpeckers there, but this time I could not find any, so Jack took his folded knife from his pocket, did a particular drumming pattern on a tree trunk, and a Pileated flew right in!

Cathie Lazier

I'll always remember Jack as the greatest field trip leader - totally knowledgeable about the natural world and incredibly patient with my repeated questions. He seemed so forgiving of our ignorance and shared so much!

Mary Beth Metcalf



I met Jack Wilburn in the fall of 1970, when I arrived in California from Wisconsin as a new prof in the Dept. of Biological Sciences at CSU, Sacramento. He was studying a colony of Great Blue Herons for his M.S. degree, while he was already a very knowledgeable naturalist. We quickly became close friends, and he became my mentor, teaching me about the unique wildlife and plants of California.

I cherish memories of backpacking trips with Jack and Phyllis on the John Muir Trail and in the high country of Zion National Park. His book of essays "Wild Animals of California and the West: Mountains and Desert," includes my favorite research critter, the Ringtail. Following our back country outing at Zion, we were lucky to spot two of my study animals at a feeding station they regularly visited in Zion Canyon.

We also shared memorable adventures whale-watching, canoeing, and birding. I learned much from Jack about the natural history of California, and I always admired him as the rugged mountain man that he was. Jo Ellen and I shall miss him very much.

Gene Trapp

My early recollections of Jack Wilburn all relate to his slide show presentations at the home of Lynne and Ed Greaves. Alas, Ed is dead, too. Jack, Ed Harper and Ed G. could all be counted on to show truly great images. Jack had many nocturnal images that were extraordinary. He was one of the early adopters of the Fresnel lens* to broadcast his flash, contributing to his successes at night. I especially remember a series of kit fox images that were great. The lens also worked well to fill in shadows in harshly lit diurnal settings.

I recall that Phyllis and Jack, along with Louise McCullough, joined me on one Tall Forest bird survey in the late 1990s. It was an autumn survey during a year that beggars tick (*Bodens frondosa*) grew riotously on the southeast side of the Tall Forest. There was a good turnout that particular Saturday. When we came to the extensive, taller-than-head-high beggars tick expanse, I walked right in and Jack followed me closely. I expected that the others would be right behind, but I was wrong about that. Louise and Phyllis balked at getting stickers all over, and they were blocking traffic for anyone farther behind who may have wished to come along with us. We got about 50 yards into the weeds when someone started blowing a shrill whistle. "That will be Phyllis," said Jack, with a knowing smile on his face. We turned around and joined the rest of the group. Jack was very good at identifying scat that we saw that day. I'm not red hot at that, so I appreciated his skill. *Jack developed, manufactured and sold this lens system.

John Trochet

Field Trips: Field Trips July 1 – August 14, 2022

Sacramento Audubon has returned to volunteer-led field trips.

Precautions are still in place for everyone's safety. Unless otherwise noted, field trips are geared towards adults and those over age 13. With wildfires on the rise, smoky conditions may occur. Please note that a forecast of bad air quality (AQI of 100 or higher) will result in trip cancellation. If you are unsure, please contact the trip leader.

For questions regarding the trip or to check the status of the trip in case of unfavorable weather conditions, please contact the trip leader. Due to insurance requirements, Sacramento Audubon leaders are not allowed to organize ridesharing/carpools. Any carpool arrangements are private agreements between the driver and the passengers. Drivers must carry adequate insurance coverage. Please be courteous and share gas expenses with the driver. FRS radios may be helpful. Please arrive early if you need driving directions or plan to carpool as starting times are the actual time the trip leaves the meeting place.

COVID - 19 Protocols

- Some trips may require advance registration. For those trips, 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.
- Additional restrictions may be required, such as proof of vaccine or face masks. 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.

To Register for a Field Trip, follow the instructions in the trip description or visit <https://www.sacramentoaudubon.org/field-trips>. If you have questions or need help, email our Registration Coordinator at sacramentoaudubonfieldtrips@gmail.com.

Family Friendly Trip to Del Paso Regional Park

Sunday, July 3, 8:30 AM

Expected length: 3 hours

Leader: Maureen Geiger

(916) 281-6652, mkeiger@comcast.com

FAMILY FRIENDLY TRIP! This large, little known park spans the confluence of I-80, Bus. 80 and the Auburn Boulevard exit. Its lush riparian habitat along Arcade Creek is definitely worth exploring, so join Maureen for a morning walk and see which species are present this time of year. If you are longing for Yellow-billed Magpies, this is your site!! This will be a 2-mile walk ending mid-morning.

Meet Maureen on Park Road north of Auburn Boulevard. From the intersection of Watt Avenue and Auburn Boulevard, drive east on Auburn Boulevard to Park Road, turn left and park on your right.

Wrights Lake

Thursday, July 7, 7 AM

Expected length: Full Day

Leader: Bill Bianco

(916) 889-4849, biancowm@yahoo.com

\$10 day visitor fee

Escape the valley heat and join Bill in searching for a variety of montane birds at this mountain lake. The high Sierra offers a wide variety of woodpeckers, finches, towhees, and other passerine birds, and it's a good trip for beginners, as well as more experienced birders. Bring plenty of water and lunch for a full day of birding.

Bring your FRS radios and be prepared for changeable weather.

Meet Bill at the North Side of Raley's Parking lot in El Dorado Hills. From Hwy 50 east, take Exit #30B; turn right on El Dorado Hills Blvd and go north under the freeway to the shopping center on your right.

Cosumnes River Preserve

Sunday, July 17, 5:30 AM

Expected length: 5-6 hours

Leader: John Trochet, (916) 736-3560

trochetj@gmail.com

This is a species-specific outing for Blue Grosbeaks. In recent years these birds have been breeding in scattered pairs over the lower Cosumnes River Preserve. Some years there have been pairs right along Franklin Blvd. opposite and north of the Visitor Center, or just at the Farm Center gate at the corner of Bruceville and Desmond Roads. As of this writing (10 May) John knows of no settled birds but expects to locate a few by July 17. An early start is important because their songs will guide us to them. Depending on the number of participants, we may carpool from the Farm Center. Viewing may be at a distance. John will have a scope, and if you have one you wish to bring, by all means do so. If Blue Grosbeaks are quickly found, then for those who are interested, John might do some general birding behind the gate. John does not expect that there will be mud to deal with, walking will be on level dirt farm roads, so any comfortable footwear should do.

Meet John at the Farm Center Gate at Desmond Road and Bruceville Road. From Sacramento, head south on I-5. Take the Twin Cities exit and head east to Franklin Boulevard. Right on Franklin and left on Desmond. The Farm Center Gate is at the intersection of Desmond and Bruceville Roads.

Summertime Blues at the Bufferlands

Sunday, July 24, 7 AM

Expected length: 3 ½ hours

Leader: Chris Conard 916-203-1610

conardc@gmail.com

Maximum Number of Participants: 20

Registration is required for this trip. Please see below for details.

Summer in Sacramento can be tough, but an early morning start can make for an enjoyable outing. We'll focus on trying to find a local specialty, Blue Grosbeak, and other summering species. We might even see a couple of blues (butterflies), a bluet or two (damselflies), and perhaps a blue dasher (dragonfly). The 2500-acre Bufferlands, surrounding the Sacramento Regional WTP, provide an open space buffer between the treatment plant and the community. A wealth of habitat has been preserved and enhanced by over 30 years of restoration of native habitats and management for wildlife. Expect a walk of up to two miles on mostly level, fairly even terrain.

Email Chris to register for this trip. He will send you directions and meeting place and answer any questions.

Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

Saturday, July 30, 9 AM

Expected length: 2-3 hours

Leader: Paul Miller and Maureen Geiger

Maureen's Phone: 916-281-6652

Email: mkeiger@comcast.net

This is a Family Friendly Trip!!! Join Paul and Maureen for an accessible trip at this great site. An easy, morning walk, it is suitable for families with toddlers and strollers as well as those with mobility challenges as it offers a smooth, wide, level cement trail. This NWR is just south of Elk Grove, and due to varied habitat, may turn up interesting birds. In addition, there are many interpretative kiosks featuring birds and other creatures plus a native plant garden. The presence of a large marshy area and surrounding farmed and fallow fields may ensure a good variety of bird species even in summer. In the past, a good supply of Showy Milkweed has attracted Monarch Butterflies. The trip will consist of several looped trails, all near the parking lot, so can last as long as desired. There is a large parking lot and accessible restrooms.

Meet Paul and Maureen at Stone Lakes NWR parking lot. Driving south from Sacramento on I-5, two miles south of the Elk Grove exit, take Exit 504 at Hood-Franklin Road, turn right and drive .8 of a mile to the NWR entrance on the left.

Participants will be required to adhere to COVID-19 protocols as outlined. Proof of vaccination is required.

Field Trips: continued

Bear Creek Dragonflies

Sunday, July 31, 8 AM

Expected length: Will end about noon

Leader: Tim Manolis 916-485-9009

ylightfoot@aol.com

This annual trip to see dragonflies and damselflies is always a treat. With Tim's expertise as the author of a field guide to California dragonflies and damselflies, you can be sure to see a variety of species. Tim will spend a couple of hours looking for dragonflies at a few spots along Bear Creek, ending the trip at about noon or a little thereafter.

Bring your binoculars, water to drink, liquids and a snack. You may wear footwear suitable for wading, though it won't be a requirement. You will probably be walking through weeds including star thistle for a short stretch, so long pants and shoes might be preferable.

Participants should contact Tim by email several days prior to the trip in case there might be a last-minute change of plans.

Meet Tim at 8 AM in the parking lot of the Jack in the Box at the corner of E. Main St. and Road 102 on the east side of Woodland, Yolo County.

Take I-5 north to Road 102, Exit #536; turn right (north) on 102 and take the next right turn onto East Main Street, and turn right into the Jack in the Box parking lot.

From there we will go north on Interstate 5 to Williams, then turn west on Highway 20 to Bear Creek, at the intersection of Highways 20 and 16 arriving around 9:30 AM.

Foothill Summer Birds

Thursday, August 4, 7:30 AM

Expected length: 2 ½ - 3 hours

Leader: Nicole Barden

530-304-5461 nicolembarden@gmail.com

Maximum number of participants: 10

Registration is required. Please email Nicole.

During this field trip we will be keeping an eye and ear out for summer favorites including Ash-throated Flycatchers, Wren-tit, Lazuli Bunting, Phainopepla, and we may even get lucky and find a Yellow-breasted Chat!

This trip is open to all birding levels, will be slow paced, and we will be taking the time to appreciate bird behavior and hopefully get good looks. We will be listening for birds as much as looking for them and keep an e-Bird list as we go. Beginning birders are encouraged to join. The trail we will be on is mostly flat, unpaved, and we will cover no more than 3 miles. Bring plenty of water and sun protection.

We will meet in a parking lot along 50 and carpool to the birding location. Exact location and directions will be provided after registration.

Napa and Sonoma County Marshes

Saturday, August 6, 7 AM

Expected length: Full Day (about 10 hrs.)

Leader: Dan Williams

Maximum number of participants: 12

Online registration is required.

Registration opens: Noon July 11

Go to www.sacramentoaudubon.org/field-trips, or use this link: <https://www.sacramentoaudubon.org/calendar/field-trip-napa-and-sonoma-county-marshes-yfm68> to register. (available after noon July 11)

Join Dan for a full day of birding two great tidal marsh hotspots in the North Bay Area. We will start at Wetlands Edge Park in American Canyon where we will walk the slough trails toward the Napa River mouth. The marshes at this time of year should be teeming with migrant shorebirds such as Marbled Godwits, Willets, both Yellowlegs, both Dowitchers, and Wilson's Phalaropes. There are usually Caspian and Forster's Terns out over the open water, and we may even get lucky and spot a Least Tern. We will spend the morning at this location, then head west into



Marbled Godwit. Photo: Daniel Brown

Sonoma County to Shollenberger Park in Petaluma. There we will eat our lunch, then take a leisurely stroll around Shollenberger's legendary wetlands where there are always multitudes of birds. Some less common targets we'll be looking for include Blue-winged Teal, Pacific Golden-Plover, American Bittern, and Golden Eagle. Hiking is easy on dirt trails and mostly flat ground.

Meeting location and directions will be provided upon registration.

Mather Lake Regional Park Family Friendly Trip and Great for Beginners Too!

Sunday, August 14, 8:30 AM

Expected length: 2-3 hours

Leaders: Mary Forrester and Maggie Forrester

Mary's Phone: 530-551-2170

Email: cmforrester@yahoo.com

Sac County Park Pass or \$6 entry fee

Join Mary Forrester and her 12-year-old daughter Maggie on this family friendly trip, exploring Mather Lake and the surrounding grasslands. This area can host a variety of birds, even in August.

This is a good trip for beginners as well as families. Bring water and insect repellent and be prepared for hot weather. A Sac County Park Pass or \$6 entry fee is required for all vehicles.

Meet in the parking lot of Mather Regional Park. From Highway 50 go south on Zinfandel (Exit #17), about 2-1/2 miles. After crossing Douglas Blvd, take the first left into the park area.

Sacramento Audubon Lapel Pin

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or pick one up at outreach events for \$5



Field Trip Reports

Bodega Bay, (5/14)

Leader John York reported: A group of five reasonably seasoned birders took on windy and foggy Bodega Bay. The group was thrilled with good looks at “pretty loons” (that means properly colored up, not messy winter-juvenile type plumage) and a pair of **Surf Scoters** pulled out on the beach. The Equestrian Trail yielded some nice passerines but was preempted by a **Raven** chasing a pair of **Bald Eagles** coming into a partially-built nest. The highlight of the day was at Bodega Head where we braved a stiff wind to sort out the three species of cormorants—made particularly easy by several **Pelagics** doing aerial displays close to the cliffs and a group of **Brandt’s Cormorants** on the biggest rock, in full breeding plumage and displaying. This was a first for everyone on the trip, so we all went home happy.

River Bend Park, (5/15)

Leader Ben Graber reported: We had a large and enthusiastic group who were rewarded with many notable sightings. Before we even left the parking lot, we saw not one, but two **Anna’s Hummingbirds** sitting on their nests. A **Red-shouldered Hawk** was also sitting on a nest near the picnic area. We had the unexpected sight of a migrating flock of **American White Pelicans** circling over the river. The participants who stuck around despite the heat were treated to beautiful views of a male **Western Tanager**. Other highlights included a **Downy Woodpecker**, **Ash-Throated Flycatchers**, **Western Kingbirds**, and **Cooper’s** and **Swainson’s Hawks**.

Ancil Hoffman Park, (5/18)

Leader Rich Howard reported: We had an enthusiastic group of 19 folks for this midweek trip. Two people were new to Sacramento Audubon, and several had not been on a trip since the pandemic began. We walked along the trail up the east side of the park. **Yellow-billed Magpies** were easy to find in the grassy areas near the picnic tables, along with noisy **Acorn Woodpeckers**, singing **American Robins** and colorful **Western Bluebirds**. We had good views of both **Nuttall’s** and **Downy Woodpeckers** and were eventually able to hear both to compare the calls. After hearing our only warbler—**Wilson’s**—most folks finally got to see one high in a cottonwood tree. A highlight was a pair of **Bullock’s Orioles** that flew between two oak trees long enough that almost everyone got to see at least one. Waterbirds on the American River included a pair of **Common Mergansers**, **Canada Geese** with goslings, and **Mallards** with ducklings. We enjoyed watching the **Cliff Swallow**

colony on the old water intake structure, and spotted one **Snowy Egret** and a single **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** here. As we returned, an adult **Bald Eagle** flew directly overhead heading downstream. 40 species were seen.

Spenceville WLR, (5/21)

Leader Richard Barbieri reported: I had seven people join me for a trip into the lower foothills north of Lincoln. After a couple of terrible windy days prior I wasn’t sure what to expect. Our first few stops were productive, but as the morning wore on things seemed to slow and we missed a couple of highlights that I can usually be sure of. By the time we made our final stop within the Spenceville wildlife area most activity had come to an unfortunate crawl. Although we did have some redeeming sightings; **Black-necked Stilts**, **Cinnamon Teal**, two pair of **Osprey** on nest, a **Bald Eagle**, **Western** and **Clark’s Grebes**, and a **Yellow Warbler**. Total count came to 56 species for the day.



Belted Kingfisher. Photo: Daniel Brown

William Pond Beginners’ Walk, (5/22)

Cathie LaZier, co-leader with Larry Hickey and Darrell Mohr, reported: Downy young **Red-shouldered Hawks** in a nest were a highlight of this walk, along with good scope views of **Belted Kingfishers**, **Acorn Woodpeckers** and **Western Bluebirds**. **Great Blue Herons** and **Great Egrets** with young were visible in the rookery, and we attempted to sort out the **Cliff**, **Barn** and **Tree Swallows** soaring overhead.

American River Pkwy Dragonflies, (5/28)

Leader Tim Manolis reported: Fourteen observers joined me on a two-hour hike around the backwater lagoons in the American River Parkway behind Rio Americano High School on Saturday, May 28. We found 16 species of

dragonflies and damselflies, a good showing, with highlights being a **Pacific Clubtail**, seen catching and eating a damselfly, the California endemic **Exclamation Damsel**, and good numbers of **American Rubyspots** and **Emma’s Dancers**. **Arroyo Bluets** and **Western Pondhawks** were also very numerous.

William Pond Park, (6/1)

Leader Larry Hickey reported: Ten of us enjoyed a late spring/early summer morning birding the William Pond part of the American River Parkway. June can be a slow time of year for birding in the Sacramento Valley, but we were pleased to find three large **Red-shouldered Hawk** chicks in a nest, **Western Bluebirds**, a **Northern Flicker** and many **Yellow-billed Magpies**. There was little activity in the open water area but we did get good views of two **Western Kingbirds** likely nesting in the area and many **Tree**, **Barn** and **Cliff Swallows**. Highlights were a large flock of **White-faced Ibis** flying overhead, **Hérons** and **Egrets** on nests in the rookery, and **Bullock’s Orioles** feeding young in the cottonwood trees along the river emitting a nearly continuous, subtle version of their call that Betty was able to identify.

Beal’s Point Family Walk, (6/4)

Leader Sandra Steurer reported: We had a beautiful overcast day at Beals Point in Folsom Lake State Park with seven participants. Some highlights that we saw were **Western Bluebirds** feeding fledglings, **Rock Wrens** sitting namely on the rocks by the lake, two **Caspian Terns**, **Common Merganser**, and **Western** and **Clark’s Grebes** with a total of 37 species seen.

William Pond Beginners’ Walk, (6/5)

Larry Hickey, co-leader with Darrell Mohr and Cathie LaZier reported: Nine beginning birders joined us for a field trip at the William Pond part of the American River Parkway. A slight drizzle evolved into rain for the first half of the trip yet the entire group remained engaged and enthusiastic despite the conditions. Highlights included a female **Wood Duck** with ducklings spotted by one of the beginning birders and a **Bald Eagle** flying overhead spotted by another. We were able to watch young **Bullock’s Orioles** begging and being fed and family groups of **White-breasted Nuthatches** and an **Oak Titmouse** family. **Western Bluebirds** were easy to see in the open grass area and the group enjoyed watching three **Red-shouldered Hawks** on and near their nest as they prepare to fledge.

Field Trip Reports *continued from page 6*

Crystal Basin, (6/8)

Maureen Geiger, co-leader with Phyllis Wilburn, reported: Crystal Basin in the Eldorado National Forest is always beautiful, and so it was when 15 of us enjoyed a wonderful day of birding. The first stop produced several **Lazuli Buntings**—always a winner!—and that set the tone. Three species of vireo, 5 species of warbler, several **Calliope Hummingbirds** doing loop-d-loops in front of us in a beautiful valley, **Green-tailed Towhees**, **Golden-crowned Kinglet**, and other resident birds made for a very satisfying day. A fleeting glimpse of a large light-bellied raptor blasting away through the trees suggested a possible **Goshawk** which just whetted everyone's appetite for more mountain birding. And the fact that the trip participants were experienced birders did not hurt either. Phyllis Wilburn has led this trip (she thinks) for about 20 years, and I am already looking forward to next year!"

Mosquito Ridge, (6/12)

Leader John York reported: Trip was canceled as scouting trip found that access to Little Oak Flat was blocked by new water features and fallen tree and there were no Spotted Owls at Big Trees. Best bird of scouting trip was **Yellow-rumped Warbler** breeding male.



Photos by Sal Acosta from dragonfly trip of May 28.



Harvest Day

Saturday, August 6, 8 AM–2 PM
Fair Oaks Horticulture Center.
Free

Featured horticultural experts will speak about selecting the right trees for our changing climate, building robust soil to sustain your garden with less water, and creating a wildlife-friendly landscape. Visit local community organizations at their booths to get free info, shop at the garden specialty merchants, and picnic with a snack from one of the food vendors.

Master Gardeners will be available in all areas of the garden so it's a great opportunity to ask lots of questions and listen in on a wide variety of mini-talks throughout the day.

Seasonal Sightings May 1 to May 31

May is one of the most exciting times of year for birding, especially the first ten days of the month, with shorebird numbers still good (though rapidly tapering off), and perhaps the very peak of songbird migration. As compared with fall (and late summer) migration, spring songbird migration can come through in just a few quick bursts. This didn't turn out to be a rarity-laden month, but there were still excellent, and some astounding, numbers of migrant songbirds. **Redheads** are quite rare in the region, but the Woodland WTP is the local stronghold, with a high of 30 individuals reported this month. Remarkably, the **Long-tailed Duck** found last November near the Nimbus Hatchery continued to 5/10. The only **Common Poorwill** reported was along Rayhouse Rd in Yolo County on 5/13. A male **Allen's Hummingbird** was photographed at a private residence on 5/8 to the southwest of Clarksburg.

The only somewhat unusual shorebird of the period was a **Snowy Plover** along Desmond Rd at Cosumnes River Preserve (CRP) on 5/1. There were continuing good numbers of uncommon migrant **Empidonax flycatchers**, especially, **Hammond's**, but also **Dusky** and **Gray flycatchers** in the first half of the month, with multiple **Willow Flycatcher** reports in the second

half of the month; the latter are much easier to find in August and September, while the former three are much easier to find, though still not easy, in April and early May. CRP was the site of some outstanding counts for several species. On a survey of the Tall Forest on 5/7, impressive to astounding numbers included 40 **Warbling Vireos**, 121 **Swainson's Thrushes** (likely a local record, and 68 were reported on 5/9), six **Yellow-breasted Chats**, 40 **Bullock's Orioles** (which should be on territory at this point, but this high number suggests some movement), 41 **Wilson's Warblers**, 16 **Western Tanagers**, and 60 **Black-headed Grosbeaks!**

In terms of local rarities, a **Gray Catbird** banded at Stone Lake NWR on 5/6 accounts for just the third record for Sacramento County. A **Chestnut-**



Black-headed Grosbeak. Photo: Daniel Brown

sided Warbler was a very nice find at the South Fork Putah Creek Reserve near Mace Blvd on 5/25 and proved to be the only rare warbler of the month. Finally, the **Summer Tanager** first reported at William Land Park on 2/16, feeding on bees at hives in Fairytale Town, continued through at least 5/3.

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 we thank the following for their reports: Max Brodie, Aidan Brubaker, Cheryl Cobbs, Lyann Comrack, Andy Engilis, Gil Ewing, Linda Gal, Cliff Hawley, Eric Hope, Jeri Langham, Andrew Lee, Mark Martucci, Nora Papiian, Michael Perrone, Steve Scott, Kevin Thomas, Beatrix Treiterer, John Trochet, Tom Uslan, and Stan Wright. Thanks to everyone for their reports—without them, this column would not be possible. —Chris Conard

Volunteer Opportunities with Sacramento Audubon

As an entirely volunteer-run organization, volunteers are essential to our continuance. Join one of our monthly programs, go on some birding field trips, get a sense of who we are, and hopefully you'll want to jump in and help. Both one-time and longer term commitments are available. Read through the volunteer opportunities below or contact the President of Sacramento Audubon (sacaudubonpresident@gmail.com) to get more information on volunteering with the Sacramento Audubon Society.

Conservation Chair - Position Open

The Conservation Chair is the Sacramento Audubon's point person for bird conservation issues in the Sacramento area. This individual serves as Sacramento Audubon's representative to Habitat 2020/ECOS, a consortium of local conservation groups. Habitat 2020 considers most local conservation issues and how to address them in a unified manner. The Conservation Chair is expected to attend Habitat/ECOS 2020 meetings and update the Sacramento Audubon Board on issues as they arise. The Conservation Chair may also form a Conservation Committee to work on specific issues such as comment letters, campaigns, or outreach. Contact the President of Sacramento Audubon for more information or to volunteer.

Education Chair - Position Open

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

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

Virtual Meeting Help

While we've all gotten more experience with virtual meeting in the past two years, some of us really shine in this new environment. If that is you, please consider volunteering to assist in hosting and facilitating Sacramento Audubon's virtual monthly meetings. We will continue to offer the option of attending online, even after we are again holding in-person meetings. For more information or to volunteer, contact the Sacramento Audubon Webmaster (sacramentoaudubon@gmail.com).

Website Maintenance

The Website Committee is seeking volunteers to help with maintenance of the Sacramento Audubon website. Contact the Sacramento Audubon Webmaster (sacramentoaudubon@gmail.com) for more information or to volunteer.

Birds on Instagram

Instagram is a great place to look at photographs of birds.

The following accounts offer opportunities to see birds in various parts of the world, as well as birds closer to home.

@audubonsociety

<https://www.instagram.com/audubonsociety/>

The official account of the National Audubon Society. Features great photos of birds, including bird facts, and advocacy information.

@jocelynandersonphotography

<https://www.instagram.com/jocelynandersonphotography/>

Jocelyn Anderson is a bird photographer based in Michigan. She frequents Kensington Metropark, where birds have learned to feed from people's hands. Her Instagram account features many videos of hand-feeding birds in this park, including often dramatic bird interactions. Enjoy close-up views of Red-bellied Woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatches, Northern Cardinals, and many more birds.



A video still of Jocelyn Anderson hand-feeding birds

@mosaicofplace

<https://www.instagram.com/mosaicofplace/>

James Scott's account features beautiful bird and mammal photography, mostly around California. He was our presenter at the February 2022 Sacramento Audubon general meeting, and his presentation may be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/GaKYi2axS4w>

@morenowildlifephotography

<https://www.instagram.com/morenowildlifephotography/>

Based in Santa Cruz, California, Joe Moreno shares beautiful photos of birds and mammals. Many hummingbirds, owls, shorebirds, and others are featured on their page.



A few birds from Joe Moreno's Instagram

SAS NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome these new members:

Nick Ashby
Nicole Barden
Maximilian Beach
Constance George
Anne Geraghty
Mary Griffith
Donna LaVecchia
Joanne Prakapas
Linda Roberts
Clark Squires
John Williams

Thank You For Your Generous Donations!

General Fund

Bill Bianco, D. Brown & W. Patterson, Mary Chasin (*In Memory Of Sweet Chu Chu*), Betty J. Cooper, Rebecca Feil (*In Honor of Janet Feil*), Elizabeth Galbreath, Anne Geraghty, Constance George, Pohlin Gillis, Elizabeth Johnson, Eric Johnson, Larry & Eileen Kay, Kimya Lambert & Chris Conard, Jo Ann Ludwig, Rosemary Mayfield, Charles Mcdonald, Barbara Mendenhall, Dan Murphy, Steven Phillips, Valerie Phillips (*In Memory of Tina Kelley*), Daphne Reimer, Jan Schori & Case Butterman, Sharon Wisecarver

Education and Conservation Fund

Bill Bianco, Pam Decant, Pohlin Gillis, Valerie Phillips (*In Memory of Tina Kelley*), Patricia L. Sutch, Dan & Jan Tankersley (*In Memory of Jack Wilburn*), Sharon Wisecarver

Bobelaine Sanctuary

Bill Bianco, Janice Caravantes, Pohlin Gillis, Candy Holland, Eric Johnson, M. Kevin McRae, Valerie Phillips (*In Memory of Tina Kelley*), Alta & Del Tura, Sharon Wisecarver

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

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.

Sacramento Audubon Chapter Board Meetings

Please contact President, Paul Miller, at sacaudubonpresident@gmail.com 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:

Tuesday, August 30, 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 sacaudubonmembership@gmail.com.

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

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White-tailed Kite Daniel 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.

Field Trips

Family Friendly Trip to Del Paso Regional Park,
July 3

Wrights Lake, July 7

Cosumnes River Preserve, July 17

Summertime Blues at the Bufferlands, July 24

Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, July 30

Bear Creek Dragonflies, July 31

Foothill Summer Birds, August 4

Napa and Sonoma County Marshes, August 6

**Mather Lake Regional Park Family Friendly Trip
and Great for Beginners Too!,** August 14