



The Observer

Sacramento Audubon Society

November General Meeting

Thursday, November 18, 2021 at 7pm via Webex

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

There is no cost to join the meeting and you do not have to be a member to attend.

There is a cap of 100 attendees. For more information visit www.sacramentoaudubon.org/monthly-speaker.

Galapagos Adventure

Presented by Susan Goodrich

The Galápagos Islands are a wonder. Sitting on the equator 563 miles off the coast of Ecuador, the 19 islands house only 56 native bird species, 45 endemic and 11 indigenous (native but also found elsewhere), but oh, what unique birds. From Flightless Cormorants to three types of Boobies to the northernmost, smallest penguin in the world, there's plenty to keep a birder intrigued. The islands host a number of breeding and migratory species (mostly shorebirds), as well, and petrels and shearwaters can be spied on inter-island jaunts. Consequently, any trip to see the varied and amazing geological landscapes, popular Giant Tortoises, Land and Marine Iguanas, and abundant marine life, would not be complete without attention to the distinctive avian life. Add to the spectacle the history of the species present and their long-term development, and you have a moving picture of evolution in action. No wonder the Galápagos inspired Charles Darwin to spend the rest of his life discovering the facts of evolution after his 1835 visit here as a naturalist on the H.M.S. Beagle.

Following a September 2021, one-week trip to the Galápagos, amateur birder and SAS member Susan Goodrich observed a host of new species, many of which are found nowhere else in the world. At our November 18 meeting, Susan will share her experiences and photos, focusing on bird life on the islands. We hope you will join us for this Galápagos Adventure!



Blue-footed Booby by Susan Goodrich

Accessible Birding

The Accessibility Committee has continued their work in documenting accessible birding locations within the Sacramento area. Our website has been recently updated with details on new locations. Sacramento is home to a wonderful variety of birding areas. While the majority of these areas have undeveloped trails, many have various levels of improvements. Our website provides a link to the Birdability Survey protocol that was developed as a crowd sourcing tool for identifying and documenting accessible features. We would love members to

familiarize themselves with the Birdability Survey. Then when you are out birding and notice some accessible features, you can complete the survey. Our team will then add the information to our website.

Starting in December we will be conducting monthly accessible birding trips. Locations will be chosen with fully accessible amenities, including restrooms and parking. Keep checking our website, along with the December edition of *The Observer* for more details.
—Paul Miller



Birdability Founder Virginia Rose
by M. Fernandez, Audubon

Field Trips To Resume In January 2022

Sacramento Audubon Society will be resuming field trips once again beginning January, 2022. The Field Activities Committee has been working with our Website Committee on the new process which will involve on-line registration to limit the number of attendees to ensure everyone's safety. The trips will be announced soon and will be phased in on a trial basis. Stay tuned for more information. Suggested places to bird are below.

This Month's Suggested Birding

Birding in the Valley in November • Ben Graber

Lincoln WWTP and Placer County Roads

Start by birding the Lincoln water treatment plant. There are several large ponds which can hold a variety of ducks. From the plant, you can drive nearby back roads of Placer County, searching flooded fields for wintering waterfowl and shorebirds. Several open dry fields may provide hunting grounds for raptors. Take I-80 east from Sacramento to Roseville. Take Hwy. 65 west to Sunset Boulevard; take West Sunset Boulevard, then right on North Foothills Boulevard. Turn left on Athens and right on Fiddymont Road to 1245 on the right. Please note hours are 7am to 3:30pm weekdays only, and birders must sign in and out at the office.

Solano Lake/Putah Creek

Putah Creek is home to many resident and wintering birds. Nearby Lake Solano is a good area for wintering ducks including possible Barrow's Goldeneye and Hooded Mergansers. Phainopeplas and Brown Creepers are possible, and Pileated Woodpeckers have been found in the area. To get to Putah Creek, take I-80 to the Pedrick Road



Hooded Merganser
by Becky Matsubara

exit between Davis and Dixon. Head north on Pedrick Road After a mile or two, there is a bridge over the creek and the parking lot is on the left. To get to Lake Solano from Putah Creek, head further north on Pedrick Road and turn left on Russell Blvd. Continue west on Russell Blvd. past the town of Winters and follow the signs to Lake Solano Park. There is a \$6 fee per car at Lake Solano Park. It is also worth heading slightly further up Highway 128 to Monticello Dam, where Canyon Wrens and Rufous-crowned Sparrows are sometimes found.

Salt Springs Valley

This area is located in western Calaveras County about an hour and a half drive from Sacramento. The open valley and its lake are home to many wintering ducks, hawks, eagles, owls and grassland birds. To get there from Sacramento, take Highway 99 south to Highway 12 in the town of Lodi. Highway 12 intersects Highway 26 in the town of Valley Springs. Take Highway 26 south to Jenny Lind Rd. Jenny Lind Road becomes Milton Road which then intersects Hunt Road and Rock Creek Road. Hunt Road, Rock Creek Road and Salt Springs Valley Road form a loop around the lake and have plenty of places to pull off the road to look at the birds. Be prepared for cold, windy conditions and thick fog. This is an extremely rural area, and though gas stations, restrooms, and dining establishments can be found in Valley Springs and Copperopolis, there are none in the valley itself.

Robinson Road, Road 113, and Bird's Landing

This is a great area for wintering raptors such as Ferruginous Hawks and Golden Eagles as well as Loggerhead Shrikes, Say's Phoebes and with luck, Mountain Plovers and Tricolored Blackbirds. Traffic is sparse on these rural roads which helps make birding pleasant and rewarding. Take I-80 from Sacramento west about 19 miles and take the Hwy. 113 exit heading south. Go through Dixon and at 17 miles turn left on Robinson Road. You can drive this road and explore side roads such as Creed Road, Goosehaven Road, Flannery Road and McCormack Road. You can continue south across Hwy. 12 and take Birds Landing Road to Shiloh. These roads all have the possibility of good birding.

Colusa National Wildlife Refuge

Approximately 1 hour north of Sacramento, the Colusa NWR is a great location to view large waterfowl concentrations. There will be plenty of ducks and geese, as well as other wetland species, passerines and raptors. The auto tour route offers unique opportunities to view the birds. Be prepared for cold and damp weather. From Sacramento, take I-5 north to the town of Williams in Colusa County. Take Highway 20 east towards the town of Colusa. The wildlife refuge is on the south side of Highway 20 halfway between the towns of Williams and Colusa.

Quarry Trail

This area is located in the Auburn State Recreation Area at the confluence of the North and South Forks of the American River. Wrentits, Rufous-crowned Sparrows, and other species typical of the Sierra Foothills are often seen here. Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, Band-Tailed Pigeons, and even Canyon Wrens are possible as well. The first 2 miles of the trail are fairly flat and follow along the American River. The trail then starts to head uphill and continues for another 5 miles or so. To get there from Sacramento, take I-80 east to the town of Auburn. Take the exit for Highway 49 south towards Placerville. Once you cross the American River into El Dorado County, the parking lot for the trailhead is on the left side of Highway 49 and is fairly well marked.



Rufous-crowned Sparrow
by Trish Gussler

What Remains

First things first: the fire season isn't over. But it appears to be slowing down. Last year, the smoke that hung over Sacramento was hard to bear on top of the pandemic. It wasn't safe indoors or out. From a local smoke perspective, this summer and fall has been much more tolerable, though the fires have been on our doorstep. I recently visited portions of the Caldor and Tamarack fire zones with a friend, driving portions of Hwys 50, 89, and 88.

Smoke still hung in the canyon of the South Fork of the American River, with puffs of smoke coming from hillsides, and nearing Echo Summit, the devastation to cabins was most evident. We visited Taylor Creek along Tahoe's southwest shore, enjoying the biting cold morning and impressive fall colors. Most enjoyable was extended views of foraging White-headed Woodpeckers and jumping kokanee salmon in the shallows near the creek's mouth. We then headed over Luther Pass to the little park along the creek in Markleeville. It was there that I saw the only monarch butterfly I've seen this year in California. The town and the park escaped the fire, though much of the forest north of town appears to be a complete loss. Similarly, the trees around tranquil little Curtz Lake and the denser forest west of Indian Creek Reservoir are devastated by high intensity fire that appears to have killed nearly all of the trees. Despite this scene, it was fun to watch over 100 Pinyon Jays foraging on Jeffrey pine cones and to hear their wavering calls. The reservoir surface was alive with over 3,000 coots, and hundreds of ducks, including a few Redheads.

We were sad to see the little canyon east of the reservoir near Diamond Valley also completely burned where in June we had enjoyed the songs and activity of Rock Wrens, Brewer's Sparrows, and Black-throated Sparrows. Where the road crosses the Carson River, there was an American Dipper on a rock downstream of the bridge. It was hard to hear over the sound of flowing water, but despite the lateness of the year, the bird was singing! Coming home via Hwy 88, the aspens were lovely. Some favorite places will not be the same, at least in my lifetime. Others remain mostly intact. It is a privilege to be so near so many interesting and beautiful areas, even though many are under threat. Surely there will be (occasional) better years ahead.

—Chris Conard



Pinyon Jays by Chris Conard



Aspens by Chris Conard

Seasonal Sightings

September 1 to September 30

September is probably the most anticipated month on the birding calendar. The possibilities seem endless. Waterfowl are building in numbers, shorebirds are still numerous, **Sandhill Cranes** are calling overhead, and it is undoubtedly the best time of year to find a rare warbler or other songbird highlight. A **Costa's Hummingbird** was briefly seen and heard calling at Ancil Hoffman park along the American River Parkway (ARP) on 9/12. The shorebird highlight of the period was a **Stilt Sandpiper** found on private ag land west of Clarksburg on 9/14. A hatch-year **Franklin's Gull**

continued from last month at the Woodland WTP through 9/2.

Lewis's Woodpeckers were widely reported moving through the flats of the Valley, especially in the last ten days of the month, and good numbers are being reported from their usual wintering areas. A **Least Flycatcher** found on 9/6 north of the Tall Forest at Cosumnes River Preserve (CRP) was the first report for Sacramento County in several years. **Gray Flycatchers**, much more regular in spring, were reported at Sacramento Bar (ARP) on 9/1 and along Elk Slough in southeastern Yolo County on 9/6.

A **Red Crossbill** was reported as a calling flyover at the UC Davis campus on 9/2. Numbers of **Brewer's Sparrows** continued to be reported at Folsom Point along Folsom Lake. Impressive numbers of **Green-tailed Towhees** were reported, with up to five along upper Mix Canyon Rd (northwest of Vacaville) from 9/8-9; the species was also found on 9/2 near the Gristmill access to ARP, on 9/4-7 and 9/16 at Reichmuth Park, and on 9/10 and 9/19 along Babel Slough.

There was a particularly good showing of uncommon to rare warblers this month. A **Black-and-white Warbler** was reported at

Continues on P. 4

Sandhill Crane Wetland Tours Resume at the Woodbridge Ecological Reserve in Lodi

Tours consist of viewing Sandhill Cranes and other unique wintering waterfowl, hearing a presentation on the cranes and their Reserve habitat, and viewing the cranes' impressive, nightly behaviors at a location that is only open to the public during these special tours. Pre-registration is required, and tour size is limited.

Effective November 13, 2017, for individuals 16+ years of age, a CDFW Lands Pass or a current fishing or hunting license in possession is required to access whenever visiting either unit of the reserve and to access each tour.

For more information visit: wildlife.ca.gov/Regions/3/Crane-Tour

Registration Opens for 2022 Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival

Mark your calendars.

Online registration opens November 6, 2021 at 8am, for the 2022 Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival, which runs January

13 - 17, 2022. All attendees, leaders, and volunteers must provide proof of vaccination. Visit morrobaybirdfestival.org for more information.



Save the Date

The Snow Goose Festival of the Pacific Flyway in Chico, California, will take place January 28 -30, 2022. More details will be available by next month at snowgoosefestival.org and registration begins in early December.



New Webcam Courtesy of Friends of Sacramento Wildlife Refuge



If you're not familiar with wildlife and bird webcams, try out Explore.org. Several weeks back, they added a webcam at the Sacramento Wildlife Refuge. explore.org/livecams/birds/sacramento-wildlife-refuge-cam

Below the webcam view, the feed details location, weather, and discussion posts. Lots of Greater White-Fronted Geese currently, skein in the sky at dawn and dusk, and plenty of interesting sounds—starting with stilts, Marsh Wrens, and Black Phoebes.

At busier locations, a CamOp moves and highlights what's interesting in the area. Need the trumpet of Sandhill Cranes coming through your tech? Sandhills are currently at explore.org/livecams/raptor-resource-project/mississippi-river-flyway-cam Explore's Mississippi River Flyway cam, along with various ducks, rafts of Franklin's Gulls that moved through in the last weeks, occasional highlighted shorebirds, islands of white pelicans that share space with families of Bald Eagles, and its own symphony of habitat sounds. The Mississippi River Flyway will freeze over and become snow-covered over the winter; fascinating to see what flies through the seasons!

For a comparison, check out the Cornell Lab of Ornithology All About Birds webcams, seasonal as well. Currently there is a California Condor near fledge at allaboutbirds.org/cams/california-condor/.

—Nancy Gronert

Seasonal Sightings September 1 to September 30 continued from p. 3

the Tall Forest of CRP on 9/3, and **Tennessee Warblers** were reported along the Putah Creek Riparian Reserve (PCRR) upstream of the UC Davis campus on 9/12, at the Elkhorn Regional Park along the Sacramento River on 9/18, and near the Stevenson Bridge downstream of Winters on 9/19. **American Redstarts** were reported from the PCRR on 9/5-6 and from Paradise Beach (ARP) on 9/12. A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was found and photographed along the PCRR from 9/11-14. A **Blackpoll Warbler** was also found and photographed along the PCRR from 9/12-18, as well as along Babel Slough on 9/17. Finally, a **Palm Warbler** was reported on 9/9 and again from 9/15-22 at

Folsom Point; it seemed unusually skulky for the species and evaded being photographed.

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, Paul Cordero, Konshau Duman, Andy Engilis, Gil Ewing, Linda Gal, Cliff Hawley, Davis Hamilton, Denise Hamilton, Jim Holmes, Emmett Iverson, Jeri Langham, Barbara Leary, Andrew Lee, Mark Martucci, Roger Muskat, Zane Pickus, Jim Rowoth, Steve Scott, Gavin Stacey, Kirk Swenson, Craig Swolgaard, Kevin Thomas, John Trochet, Bart Wickel, and Lynette Williams. Thanks to everyone for their reports—without them, this column would not be possible. —Chris Conard

SAS NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome these new members:

- Mary Claire Abbott
- Jacqueline Baritell
- Brad Branan
- Alanna Butterworth
- Ray Gundlach
- Rodd Kelsey
- Robyn Smith

Thank You For Your Generous Donations!

General Fund

- Jacqueline Baritell
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- Nancy & Bill Bittner
- Adrienne Brown
- Lori Markoff
- Steve & Tracy Wetzel

Bobelaine Sanctuary

- Darlene Bettencourt
- Eugene Ersfeldt
- Jim Hagedorn
- Lori Markoff
- Steve & Tracy Wetzel
- Glenn Wilson

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

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. New members will receive our newsletter online; so be sure to include your email address and check if you would like to be added to our Action Alert List.

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www.sacramentoaudubon.org

membership@sacramentoaudubon.org

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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 and white paper copy mailed to you instead, please email membership@sacramentoaudubon.org

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.

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White-tailed Kite Dan Brown

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

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

Sacramento Audubon November Program

**Galapagos
Adventure**
Presented by
Susan Goodrich
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