

The Observer

Sacramento Audubon Society



October General Meeting

Thursday, October 21, 2021 at 7pm via Webex

The October 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.

Breeding Birds of Sacramento: A Tale of Two Atlases and Three Decades of Change

Presented by Ed Pandolfino with Lily Douglas, Tim Manolis, and Chris Conard

We all know how much the Central Valley has changed in the past few decades—increased development, changes in agriculture, changing climate. But how has all that affected our breeding birds? Ed will take us through the results of the recently completed SECOND Sacramento County Breeding Bird Atlas to answer that question.

This new Atlas is a follow up to an earlier Atlas effort led by Tim Manolis, completed in the early 1990s, but not published until now. Central Valley Bird Club just released a book comparing the results of those two Atlases, the first published comparison of subsequent BBAs in the state. The authors include Ed, and three other Sacramento County ornithologists: Lily Douglas, Tim Manolis and Chris Conard.

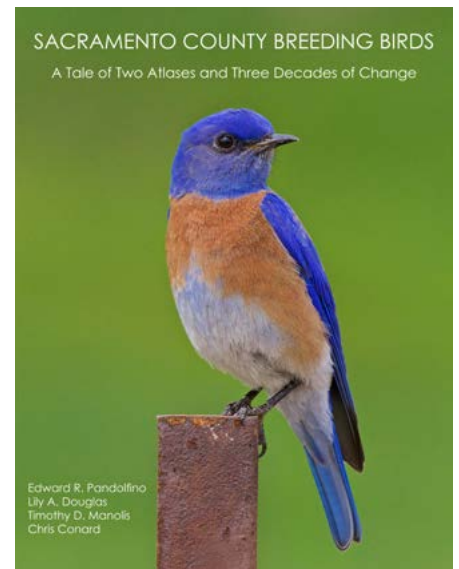
Some of the results may match your expectations (grassland birds in general in trouble), but others may surprise you. For example, we now have MORE species of breeding birds than during the earlier Atlas period. Ed will discuss the “winners”, new breeding birds, the “losers”, birds no longer breeding in the County, and dramatic changes in breeding habitat selection for some species.

The bottom line from this comparison is NOT a story of “doom and gloom” but one

of the amazing resiliency and adaptability of birds.

Ed Pandolfino served as vice-president of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, Placer County conservation chair for Sierra Foothills Audubon, and president of Western Field Ornithologists. He has been on the boards of the Institute for Bird Populations and Western Field Ornithologists. He was a regional editor for North American Birds for northern California and is on the editorial board of Central Valley Birds. He has published nearly four dozen papers on the status and behavior of western birds, contributed chapters to two books, and co-authored *Birds of the Sierra Nevada: Their Natural History, Status, and Distribution* (U.C. Press, 2013).

Lily Douglas helped manage habitat in the Owen’s Valley for a number of species of conservation concern, including Greater Sage Grouse. She used her considerable GIS skills to map Golden Eagle nests from historic files and helped develop management plans for desert tortoise conservation areas for the California State Office of the Bureau of Land Management. Lily is currently the Assistant Coordinator for the Central Valley Joint Venture for migratory bird habitat conservation for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and serves on the board of the



Central Valley Bird Club. Her most recent publication is a study of urban-breeding Yellow-billed Magpies in Sacramento.

Tim Manolis served as president of Western Field Ornithologists and first president of the Central Valley Bird Club. He has been actively involved in Sacramento Audubon Society for over 50 years, including serving as compiler of the Sacramento Christmas Bird Count and the first Sacramento Breeding Bird Atlas. He is the author of *Dragonflies*

Continues on page 2

This Month's Suggested Birding

Birding in the Valley in October • Darrell Mohr

Sailor Bar

This is always a productive site, located on the north side of the American River. Look for migratory ducks on the river. Walk inland along the path above the river and look for the Rufus Crowned Sparrow. As you walk along the riverbank, check the shrubbery for migratory warblers. The trail splits as you walk down the river, go right and look for Goldfinches in the berry bushes. Phainopepla may be perched at the top of a tree.

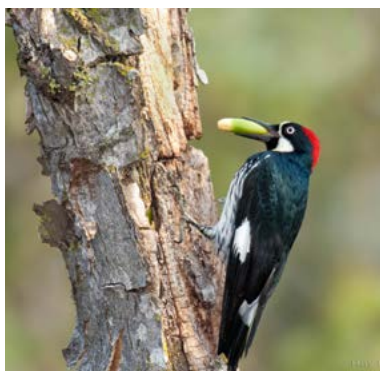
To get to the park from Hazel, go west on Winding Way to Illinois, go left into the park. Pay your fee, park your car, and bird.



Phainopepla by Ray Rozema

Mather Lake

This is a lake with upland habitat located in the Eastern part of Sacramento County. There is a picnic area as well as restrooms. A walk around the lake will be productive. Start birding in the parking lot where you will see Grackles and Blackbirds. Go left from the parking lot and follow the trail along the edge of the lake. Watch for Green Herons and American Bitterns hiding in the Tules. When you get to the end of the trail, turn around and walk around the other side of the lake. Look for Swans, Cormorants, Green Herons, Great Blue Herons and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. There is plenty of parking. Take Highway 50 to Sunrise South to Douglas Road go right to Zinfandel go left to the entrance. Pay the fee and park. Then go birding.



Acorn Woodpecker by Ray Rozema

River Bend

River Bend Park is located on the south side of the American River. The habitat is a mix of trees and shrubs. This is a good site to find Acorn, Nuttall's and Downy Woodpeckers as well as a possible Red-breasted Sapsucker. There are many paths to follow including along the American River.

Watch for Great Horned Owls and Cooper's Hawk. White-breasted Nuthatches will be in the trees. Check the river for Yellowlegs and Killdeer. From Sacramento take Folsom Blvd to Rod Beaudry Drive, turn left and go into the park. Pay the fee, then park, and bird.



Greater Yellowlegs by Ray Rozema

Consumnes River Preserve

Ponds and upland present a varied habitat. Plenty of walking at this site. If the ponds are full of water, there will be a variety of duck species. Follow the boardwalk out into the center of the ponds where there is an area to sit and watch the birds come and go. After the ponds take the walk through the wooded area and look for warblers. Watch for Song Sparrows, Lincoln Sparrows and Fox Sparrows.

Check the bushes for Wrentits. To get there, take I-5 South to Twin Cities Road. Turn left. Go to Franklin Blvd. Go right, Drive to the Visitor Center. Parking is on the left.



Fox Sparrow by Veit Irtenkauf

Breeding Birds of Sacramento: from page 1

and *Damselflies of California* and illustrator of *Butterflies of the San Francisco Bay* and *Sacramento Valley Regions* and *Spiders of California and the Pacific Coast States*, all in the U.C. Press California Natural History Guides series. Tim has the distinction of having a damselfly he collected in Brazil named after him (*Tepuibasis manolisi*).

Chris Conard is a natural resource specialist for the Bufferlands, responsible for managing seasonal wetlands for waterbird habitat, maintaining habitat restoration projects,

monitoring flora and fauna, and giving public tours. He is the eBird reviewer for Sacramento County, compiles the Folsom Christmas Bird Count, and has written the "Seasonal Observations" column for Sacramento Audubon since 2000. He was editor for *Birding in the Sacramento Region* and wrote the chapter on Clark Mountain for *A Birder's Guide to Southern California*. Chris spent 15 years on the Central Valley Bird Club board, including six years as president.

Online Spanish-language Bird Guide

Audubon has a free, online Spanish-language North American bird guide available at <https://www.audubon.org/es/guia-de-aves>

Aguililla Pecho Rojo
Latin: *Buteo lineatus*



A Great Big Thank You to Our Volunteers

Like many of us, I've been doing a lot of backyard birding over the past year. And I have to admit I don't have the best backyard for it. It's small, lots of non-native plants. This morning while out weeding, I noticed Bushtits flitting from tree to tree. On some past SAS field trip, I learned to check the Bushtit flocks during migration for warblers. Thank you to whomever that field trip leader or participant was that shared this tip with me.

Low and behold, a Yellow Warbler. The beautiful yellow all the way along the belly from tip to tail. Thank you Mark Sawyer for that bit of identification information, explained on a field trip to Point Reyes.

And then another little bird flitted nearby, delicate gray coloring, much softer yellow underneath. Was that a white eye-ring? No, it's not complete. Warbling Vireo I thought. But then checked myself. Is this the right time of year to see a Warbling Vireo? So I went to check the Sacramento Audubon Checklist of Birds on the SAS website. Yes, according to the checklist, I "should find" Warbling Vireo in August and September. Thank you to all the volunteers who helped put this checklist together – Chris Conard, Dan Tankersley, Maureen Geiger, Dan Brown, and many more. Thank you to John Harding who did all the coding work to transform the checklist

from a paper document to an interactive list on the website. Thank you to all the members of the web committee, past and present, who volunteer to keep the website looking good and providing the public with helpful information. Thank you to all the board members, who debated and struggled with the decision of when and how to upgrade the website.

Right now, a lot of us are asking when SAS will start offering field trips and in-person meetings? Right now, a lot of us are impatient for things to get back to the way they were. The volunteers on the SAS board and committees are struggling to make those decisions for the organization and all the individuals involved. Thank you to them all for trying their best to make the right decision - for considering the different perspectives and needs of our diverse membership.

Things are still quite different than they used to be. COVID still won't let us go back to the way things were. But maybe, instead of asking for what used to be offered by Sacramento Audubon, maybe it's time to ask if there is a different way to be involved?



Warbling Vireo

While SAS has many different volunteers doing great work, we also have numerous volunteer positions open in education, conservation, and more. Don't wait to be asked to fill a position. Contact Bill Bianco at president@sacramentoaudubon.org and let him know how you would like to be involved. Need some ideas for what you might be able to do with Sacramento Audubon? Check out the current open volunteer positions at <https://www.sacramentoaudubon.org/volunteer>.

–Mary Forrestal

Chalk It Up!

This Labor Day weekend, the Sacramento Audubon was proud to sponsor Madison Coan as an artist for Chalk It Up! Madison, a sophomore at Folsom High School, created a mural of local birds and water. She drew her inspiration from all the fantastic photos that have been donated to the Sacramento Audubon website.

Chalk It Up!, celebrating its 31st year, is a chalk art festival that includes live music, local food, craft vendors and other fun activities. It's held at Fremont Park in midtown Sacramento and attended by thousands.

SAS chose to sponsor two sidewalk squares for our chalk art mural. Although sponsors do not select the artist, we think Madison did a great job! In addition to the mural, SAS President, Bill Bianco, and VP, Daphne Reimer, were on hand to spread the word about Sacramento Audubon. Thank you to everyone who helped make this such a successful event.



Chalk Mural Artist Madison Coan

Amazing Shorebirds

Shorebirds are among the most dynamic, interesting, and well-travelled animals on the planet. Yet, they are often overlooked even by intermediate birders. Nearly anyone who spends time outdoors is aware of waterfowl, raptors, and the birds that come to backyard feeders. With a few exceptions, shorebirds can be missed without an active search. But when good habitat is found, the views can be spectacular. Unlike many birds that hide deep in vegetation, shorebirds do their thing in the open. If you're patient, and with a little luck, you can approach rather closely. The fleeting nature of shorebird habitat--drying fields, wetland edges, or mudflats--adds to the fun when good conditions can be found and savored.

I am somewhat spoiled when it comes to shorebirds, with my job at the Bufferlands and access to the Sacramento Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant. Pre-Covid, when we found a rarity or had particularly good conditions, I would arrange for access for people to see these birds (there is no unguided public access). But like so many things, this is now on hold. To date, we have recorded 31 species of shorebirds on the property. Recent highlights include Snowy Plover, Ruddy Turnstone (very rare inland), and Semipalmated Sandpiper. My coworker, Steve Scott, was able to take really nice photos of the latter two.

Shorebirds in our region include stilts and avocets, plovers, and the highly diverse sandpiper family (from the six-inch Least Sandpiper to the 23-inch Long-billed Curlew). Life strategies range from local-breeding Killdeer and Spotted Sandpipers, to the Long-billed Curlews breeding in semi-arid grasslands of the West, and Arctic breeders like Whimbrels, Western Sandpipers, and Black-bellied Plovers. Finding shorebirds usually requires knowledge of timing and available habitat. Sites with good track records you can visit include Cosumnes River Preserve (Desmond Rd and the wetlands west of Franklin Blvd), Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, and the Woodland Wastewater Treatment Plant. Recently, there have been interesting reports along the shore of the receding Folsom Lake. Like the shorebirds, birders who seek them need to find the transitory habitat conditions the birds use. Migration pulses from late March through early May and again from July through early October, with many species wintering locally.

For more on this topic, I recently gave an online talk for the Bufferlands about local shorebirds. If you're interested, visit www.bufferlands.com and click on "Calendar of Events" for this talk and five others on birds and other natural history topics

—Chris Conard



Western Sandpiper by Chris Conard



Ruddy Turnstone by Steve Scott



Semipalmated Sandpiper by Steve Scott

Feeding Birds Could Get Pricey This Year

The severe drought pummeling the West and the Great Plains is one key reason for an expected spike in the cost of popular bird foods. For millions of Americans who feed wild birds, the enjoyment they get from nourishing and observing avian visitors is well worth the cost of providing a steady food supply.



This year, though, that cost is on track to be especially high.

One big reason: Areas that grow the grains and seeds in bird food mixes are among those hardest hit by the drought parching half the country. Experts anticipate significantly diminished harvests of bird-feeding staples sunflower, safflower, and millet this fall. Combined with other factors like high shipping costs and rising demand as birding grows in popularity, the severe, persistent drought could force households to reassess their bird-feeding budgets. —Audubon



CVBC Central Valley Birding Symposium

The Central Valley Bird Club will be hosting the 25th annual Central Valley Birding Symposium Virtual Event on Friday, November 19, and on Saturday, November 20, 2021.

They have hired an experienced event planner and have put together a program of favorite CVBS regulars along with a few surprises. They are also looking forward to sharing the Bird Club's activities from these past 16 months.

Here's the website for this year's virtual event: <https://cvbirds-symposium.netlify.app>
Registration opens September 24 2021 at 6PM

If you have an additional questions, please direct them to Susie Nishio at cvbsreg@gmail.com. Also, keep an eye out for in-person field trips that may resume this winter.

City of Roseville Public Meeting Speak Up to Protect Bird Habitat

The City of Roseville is beginning the process of developing a strategic master plan for Roseville Parks, Recreation, and Libraries. Citizens of Roseville are invited to join a virtual public meeting on **Tuesday, September 28 at 6:30pm**. This is your opportunity to help shape the future of Roseville Parks, to include more native plants as habitat for insects and birds.

According to the City of Roseville's website: ***Your involvement is mission critical***
In order to make this plan truly reflective of the community today, and the community we want to become, we need your input. In the coming months, you will have the opportunity to provide feedback through a combination of surveys and public meetings (both in person and virtually).

To register to attend the September 28th meeting sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70a0d4caaae2aa3fa7-future>.

You can read more about the PRL Strategic Master Plan Process on the City of Roseville's website: https://roseville.ca.us/news/what_s_happening_in_roseville/PRL_strategic_master_plan.



Young Birder at a Roseville Park

Seasonal Sightings

August 1 to August 31

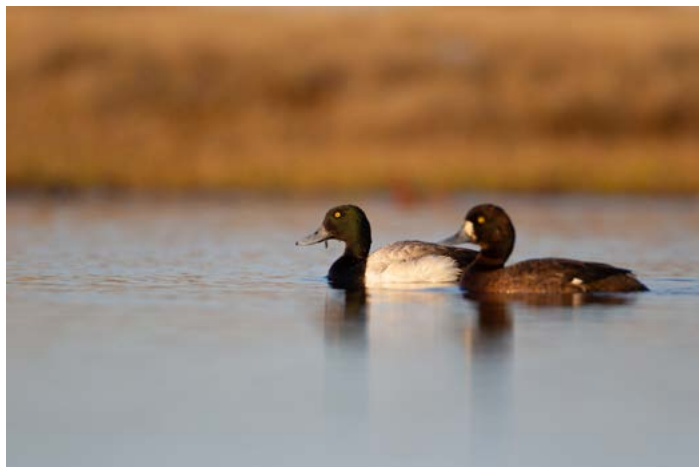
August is one of our hottest months, both in terms of temperature and bird migration. Thankfully, after a very slow spring, the beginning of “fall” migration was more typical in terms of days reported with decent movements of birds. Woodland WTP produced regular reports of up to five **Redheads** throughout the month, and even a **Greater Scaup** on 8/17. The first returning **Sandhill Cranes** were reported from Staten Island on 8/30. A female/immature **Costa’s Hummingbird** was an excellent find at Cosumnes River Preserve (CRP) on 8/5.

As is often the case, shorebirds stole the show. A **Snowy Plover** was found at Sacramento Regional WTP (SRWTP) on 8/9, and **Snowy Plover** reports from the North Regional Pond near the Woodland WTP came on 8/11, 8/16, and 8/19-21. There were good numbers of **Marbled Godwits** throughout the area, especially in Yolo County, and one at the odd location of William B Pond along the American River Parkway (ARP) on 8/5 is worth noting. **Baird’s Sandpipers**, **Pectoral Sandpipers**, **Semipalmated Sandpipers**, and **Solitary Sandpipers** were widely reported and too numerous to list individually. A **Ruddy Turnstone** photographed on 8/16 at SRWTP was just the third county record, and one was seen briefly on ag land west of Clarksburg on 8/31; we go many years without any reports of this predominantly coastal species. A **Red Phalarope** at Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area on 8/8-9 was an excellent record for the Central Valley of this most pelagic of the phalaropes. An adult **Franklin’s Gull** was found at Woodland WTP on 8/7-9 and a hatch-year **Franklin’s Gull** was found on 8/31 at the same location. A **Brown Pelican** seen off Sherman Island on 8/11 in southwestern Sacramento County was a nice find.

A **Northern Pygmy-Owl** was reported briefly calling at Gibson Ranch Park on 8/14, which is very early for this species to turn up on the valley floor. Very early **Merlins** were found at Sailor Bar on 8/23 and photographed downstream at Larchmont Park on 8/24. A **Lewis’s Woodpecker** at Sailor Bar along the ARP on 8/31 was a nice surprise, as was a **Gray Flycatcher** at CRP on 8/10. A **Red-eyed Vireo** reported at Lake Solano on 8/25 was the only truly rare songbird reported in the area. Keeping on the early bird theme, a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was found at East Portal Park in Sacramento on 8/12. Up to seven **Brewer’s Sparrows** were found at Folsom Point beginning on 8/24, but the report of a very early **Sooty Fox Sparrow** at CRP on 8/10 was even more unexpected. Finally, **Yellow-breasted Chats** were more widely reported than usual, and always make a nice highlight for any outing.

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, Sophia Chau, Lyann Comrack, Konshau Duman, Andy Engilis, Marcus England, Bob Greenleaf, Cliff Hawley, Emmett Iverson, Manfred Kusch, Jeri Langham, Andrew Lee, Tim Ludwick, Mark Martucci, Ed Pandolfino, Zane Pickus, Jim Rowoth, Steve Scott, Lucas Stephenson, Mark Stephenson, Craig Swolgaard, John Trochet, Emily Wells, and Lynette Williams. Thanks to everyone for their reports—without them, this column would not be possible. —Chris Conard



Greater Scaup Pair



Northern Pygmy-Owl by Frank D. Lospalluto

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.

SAS NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome these new members/ households.

- Joseph D’Onofrio
Maureen Knowlton & Greg Einhorn
Suzanne Lapin
Susan Levitsky
Robert Lyons
William Maddox
Anita Nichols
Michele Nye
Carla Resnick

Thank You For Your Generous Donations!

General Fund

- Viola Saima-Barklow, Betty J. Cooper, David Crow, Charlene G. Eberwine, Dennis Eckhart, Diana Hickson, Maureen Knowlton & Greg Einhorn, Suzanne Lapin, Cathie Lazier, Barbara Leary, Lena O. Lem donated in Memory of her sister Marty, Rosemary Mayfield, Eric Ross & Karen Tarp, Susan Scott & Ed Harper donated in Memory of Bruce Swinehart, Aimee Staats, Dan & Jan Tankersley, Howard Whitaker, Joel Wiley.

Education and Conservation Fund

- Karen D. Benson, Ann Burris, Joyce C. Rietz, Anne Estes donated in Memory of her cousin Judith Eden Mathews, John & Julie Hamlin, Barbara Leary, Viola Saima-Barklow, Dan & Jan Tankersley, Peter Thomas, Steven Totheroh, John Williams.

Bobelaine Sanctuary

- Karen D. Benson, Joe Easley, Madi & Rod Elsea Lee, M. A. Nunes, Joyce C. Rietz, Eric Ross & Karen Tarp, Viola Saima-Barklow, Susan Scott & Ed Harper donated in Memory of Ken Poerner, Dan & Jan Tankersley donated in Memory of Ken Poerner, Doctors J. W. & Patricia Wells.

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.

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

Sacramento Audubon Society Membership Application

www.sacramentoaudubon.org

membership@sacramentoaudubon.org

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

Date _____

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

Donation for Conservation/Education \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Make checks payable to Sacramento Audubon Society, or use your credit card or PayPal on our website at: www.sacramentoaudubon.org

Name _____

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Action Alert: Y / N

New members will receive The Observer in color, via email (please provide your email address above.) If you would prefer a black and white paper copy mailed to you instead, please email membership@sacramentoaudubon.org

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 November 30.

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

Field Trip Information

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

See the Latest SAS Action on Facebook



facebook.com/SacramentoAudubon

You can enjoy the photos and commentary without joining Facebook

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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 October Program

Breeding Birds of Sacramento: A Tale of Two Atlases and Three Decades of Change

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