

The Observer

Sacramento Audubon Society



VOLUME 68 • NO. 3

MARCH 2016

General Meeting

Thursday, March 17, 2016
Effie Yeaw Nature Center
Assembly Room, 7pm

Life history, ecology, and conservation of the giant gartersnake (Thamnophis gigas) in California's Great Central Valley
Eric C Hansen

The giant garter snake is a federal- and state-listed species endemic to California's Great Central Valley. Associated with low-gradient streams, wetlands, and marshes of the Valley floor, giant gartersnakes are among California's most aquatic reptiles. The conversion of Central Valley wetlands for agriculture and urban uses has resulted in the loss of as much as 95% of historical habitat for the giant gartersnake. Cryptic and notoriously wary, this species is among the most difficult of California's garter snakes to study, yet ecological information on which to base management and regulatory decisions urgently is needed to guide decision-making. This presentation will provide notes on the habits and ecology of giant garter snakes, discuss the role of land use and water management on their current distribution, and provide insights regarding the steps needed to maintain the species into the future. Attendees will also be provided with a discussion of steps the citizen scientist can take to assist with the recovery of this highly-charismatic animal

Eric Hansen is a herpetologist living in Sacramento. Raised and inspired by his herpetologist father, Mr. Hansen completed his undergraduate studies with a Bachelor of



Giant Gartersnake (female)
Eric C Hansen

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BIRD AND BREAKFAST AT EFFIE YEAW **MARCH 19-20, 2016**

Traditional Event -- Saturday, March 19 at 8am

Family-Friendly Event -- Sunday, March 20 at 8am

The American River Natural History Association (ARNHA) and Sacramento Audubon are teaming up to offer a special weekend of morning birding trips coupled with wonderful breakfast fare.

This event, held at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center in Ancil Hoffman Park in Carmichael, starts with Bird Walks guided by some of our best local birders. For weeks in advance, these guides scout the Nature Study Area so they will be able to point out nests and local rarities. After the Walk, you will join fellow birders for wonderful food, good coffee and other fun to help raise money for the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. No extensive birding experience is necessary--this event caters to all levels.

BIRD AND BREAKFAST continued on page 6

BOBELAINE NEEDS **YOUR URGENT HELP**

The Bobelaine Sanctuary is a treasure that Sacramento Audubon has maintained for decades. Now we need a volunteer to serve as the Bobelaine Sanctuary Manager and also additional volunteers to help maintain and protect the Bobelaine Sanctuary. Robert Thomas, our volunteer Sanctuary caretaker for over 20 years, is retiring and no longer able to maintain the trails and other requirements to keep the Sanctuary safe and open. We are exceedingly thankful to Robert for his service. We are in discussion with the Sacramento Regional Conservation Corps and we hope they will do the "heavy lifting" needed to assure the trails at Bobelaine remain open and available to everyone. We're hoping it will be a "win-win" partnership. An organized team will assure that Bobelaine will continue to be a special place. The Sanctuary Manager will coordinate and schedule the activities of partners and volunteers to maintain and improve the property and some expenses are covered. If you are interested in the Sanctuary Manager role, or if you are interested in volunteering at Bobelaine, please contact Larry Hickey at President@sacramentoaudubon.org.

If we can't continue to maintain and protect the property, the Bobelaine Sanctuary is at risk. The National Audubon Society owns the property. They have indicated that without management and maintenance by the Sacramento Audubon Society they may need to divest themselves of the property. For more information about Bobelaine, please visit the website: www.sacramentoaudubon.org/resources/bobelainesanctuary.html. Bobelaine also needs your donations. Please donate at: www.sacramentoaudubon.org/payments.html. Click the Bobelaine Donations button and make your contribution.

Field Trip Findings

William Pond Park, Beginners Trip (2/16) — Leader Cathie LaZier reported: “Craig DeMartini and Darrell Mohr joined me in leading a beginners’ trip on an unseasonably warm day. Lark Sparrows in the scope were enjoyed by all, and we looked at the Great Blue Herons in their rookery, and spotted a Hooded Merganser. Best bird was an adult Bald Eagle flying over us, and later landing in a eucalyptus tree allowing a scope view. E-bird total was 41 species.”

Buck’s Creek Trail/Serrano Parkway, El Dorado Hills — A GBBC Trip (2/13) — Leader Maureen Geiger reported: “Twelve people showed up and we had a gorgeous day with good birds. We had 45+ species, highlights being more than 80 American Wigeon and 4 Hooded Mergansers, always a treat. Watching a Common Gallinule step ON a pond turtle on a log provided a good laugh!”

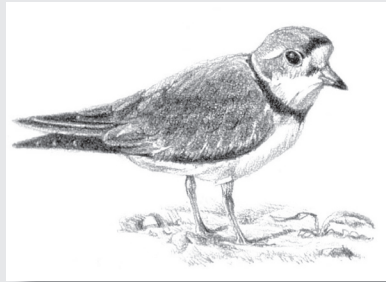
Beal’s Point (2/7) — Leader Deb Weston reported: “It was a picture-perfect day, no wind and temperatures very mild. 22 people came out to see 43 species. Highlights were a fly-over adult Bald Eagle (ordered especially for Bob, on his first Sac Aud trip), two very accommodating Rufous-crowned Sparrows, Rock Wrens, a skunk walking among the granite blocks below the sidewalk and a Common Loon on the lake. Everyone was happy to see the grass green and the lake level high. More than one passerby asked if we were there to take pictures of the water rising. An awesome day with a fantastic group of birders.”

Mather Regional Park (2/6) — Leader Wayne Blunk reported: “Splendid weather greeted our group of 14 for a wonderful morning of winter birding. Much to our surprise we tallied 49 species. An Osprey provided excellent looks for all and even snagged a large fish and perched in full view to consume the breakfast. White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Hermit Thrush, Western Bluebirds, Tree Swallows and a Lincoln Sparrow were highlights. A number in the group got looks at a River Otter.”

Colusa NWR (2/2) — Leader Dan Tankersley reported: “Eight birders enjoyed a beautiful winter’s afternoon

at this wonderful Central Valley refuge. Goose numbers were down across the board, but there were plenty of ducks and other species to pique everyone’s interest. We arrived at the refuge around 1:30pm and stayed until sunset. It’s a great place to be to experience the sights and sounds of nature.”

Birding the Best Places (1/31) — Leader Tim Manolis reported: “I led a field trip with eight other participants to various spots in the Sacramento and Davis areas. We started at the Sacramento City Cemetery complex at Riverside and Broadway. It was cold and overcast and 100s of White-fronted and Snow geese were moving south high overhead. The birding was a lot slower than it had been a few days before, but after walking all around the cemeteries for some time, we came upon a flock of about 15 Red Crossbills in a conifer at the Odd Fellows Cemetery. We had good looks until the flock flew off to the southeast. We heard



Plover sp.
Daniel Kilby

a Red-breasted Nuthatch in this area as well.

“We then headed to the Bridgeway Island Pond in West Sacramento, where we saw at least 100 Blue-winged Teal amongst about twice that many Cinnamon Teal.

Other birds of interest here were White Pelicans, Black-necked Stilts, American Avocets, and Forster’s Terns. Even under still-cloudy skies and in the teeth of an arctic blast of cold air, there were a surprising number of Tree Swallows feeding low over the pond and quite a few White-throated Swifts circling overhead.

Our last stop was along Quail St. and in the surrounding neighborhood in Davis, but despite encountering birders who had seen the Evening Grosbeaks earlier in the morning, we apparently arrived just a few minutes too late to see any.

Not on the trip, but later in the afternoon, I was very surprised to see a Band-tailed Pigeon perched high in the top of our tallest backyard tree.”

Yolo/Solano Big Day (1/30) — Leader Scott Hoppe reported: “Eight birders participated in this year’s Big Day. We tallied 104 species, which is a bit low for this annual trip (now in its fourth year). But enthusiasm was high, everyone had a great time and the weather was good. Highlights included at least 6 Vesper Sparrows at “Vesper Sparrow Corner” east of Winters, an amazing 12 Loggerhead Shrikes in the Jepson Prairie and Robinson/Flannery Rd. area, 3 Great Horned Owls, 2 Burrowing Owls and a Short-eared Owl which was the last bird of the day, seen at dusk northeast of Davis. We all enjoyed a nice dinner together to tally the species and enjoy socializing and talking about the birds we had seen.”

Lincoln Grasslands/West Placer Co (1/24) — Leader Scott Hoppe reported: “It turned out to be a great day for 7 birders as we explored the area around Lincoln. We tallied an impressive 103 species. Highlights included 2 Golden Eagles performing an incredible aerial courtship with one flipping over as the other came down from above and they briefly locked talons, 5 Ferruginous Hawks, a Merlin, Lewis’s Woodpeckers, lots of Tricolored Blackbirds and flocks of thousands of geese in the western half of the area. Everyone agreed it was an awesome day of birding.”

Sandhill Cranes and other Wintering Birds of the Sacramento Valley (1/24,30,31) — Coordinator Mike Savino reported: “The SAS/SOSC crane tours continue to be well attended and well enjoyed. The three tours done in January totaled 50 visitors. As usual we began around 3:30pm at the Cosumnes River Preserve Visitor Center and then drove to Staten Island to wait for a crane fly-in. We were lucky enough to have a good display of cranes each evening at sunset. Large fly-overs of geese (Snow, White-fronts, Canada) were a welcome addition as was the appearance of a small variety of ducks and shorebirds. The numbers of Tundra Swans varied day by day from awesome to hardly any. Our last scheduled crane tours are set for the end of February. By the end of March the cranes will be gone until September.”

Salt Springs Valley (1/23) — Leader Linda Pittman reported: “This was a

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Field Trips



Hummingbird sp.
Kirsten Munson

Field Trip Information

For questions regarding the trip or to check the status of the trip in case of unfavorable weather conditions, please call the trip leader first. If he or she cannot be reached, for trips through April 3, contact the scheduler Mark Martucci, matuchbirdman@yahoo.com, 833-6722. For trips after April 4, contact the scheduler Carla Barbaro, cbarbaro@comcast.net, 717-8808.

Due to insurance requirements, Sacramento Audubon leaders are not allowed to organize ridesharing/carpools. Participants are, however, encouraged to voluntarily share rides. 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 can be helpful on all trips. Starting times are the actual time the trip leaves the meeting place. Try to arrive early, especially if you want driving directions or plan to carpool. Groups must make prior arrangements with the trip leader. In case of INCLEMENT WEATHER contact the trip leader for trip status.

Wednesday, March 2, 7:30am
Glenn Hall Park, Paradise Beach,
American River Parkway
Leader: Sally Walters Schmoltd
710-1077, bajaowl@gmail.com

Join Sally for a morning bird walk along the levee and willow covered sand bars of the American River. Sally will be looking for migrants and resident breeding birds, wrens, towhees, and other small passerine birds. From Highway 50 take Howe Ave north to Fair Oaks Blvd. Turn left onto Fair Oaks and cross over the American River. Turn right on Carlson Ave which is the first stop light past the American River bridge. Continue on Carlson Ave to its end, at Glenn Hall Park. Meet on top of the levee. This will be a fairly easy walk, but expect some uneven terrain, gravel, sand, and rock cobble. This is an excellent trip for beginners.

Saturday, March 5, 8am
Lake Solano/Putah Creek
Leaders: Tim Fitzer and Ann Burris
Tim: 870-5207, spskua2@comcast.net
Ann: 947-7573,
burris.ellieann@gmail.com

This is a great area to find Pileated Woodpecker, Phainopepla, Brown Creeper, Barrow's Goldeneye and many other late wintering birds. Meet Tim and Ann at the Park and Ride off I-80 in West Sacramento. From Sacramento, take the West Capitol Ave, Exit #81; turn left at the light and then left again into the Park and Ride lot.

Sunday, March 6, 6:30am
Arrowhead Marsh and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Regional Shoreline
Leaders: Scott Hoppe, 835-8471
shoppe01@surewest.net

Mark Martucci, 833-6722
matuchbirdman@yahoo.com

Arrowhead Marsh and MLK, Jr. Regional Shoreline, encompassing much of San Leandro Bay, is an extremely productive birding area. It is well known for Ridgeway's Rails, lots of wintering ducks and hundreds of shorebirds during the falling tides. It has also produced rarities and hard to find species such as Nelson's and Swamp Sparrows. We will likely spend most of the day there. However, time permitting, we may visit other nearby locations. Bring lunch and liquids, and dress for possible cold early morning temps. Meet Scott and Mark at the Park and Ride off I-80 in West Sacramento. From Sacramento, take the West Capitol Ave, Exit #81; turn left at the light and then left again into the Park and Ride lot.

Monday, March 7, 7:30-11:30am
Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area
Leader: Mark Sawyer, 968-1661
MarkSawyer3383@yahoo.com

Join Mark in this great area 10 minutes from downtown Sacramento. Depending on the extent of flooded fields on the auto tour route, there may be good numbers of shorebirds and waterfowl as well as raptors. From Sacramento, take I-80 west, take the first exit (#78) at the west end of the Yolo Causeway. Turn right at the stop sign, go under the freeway, make a left up onto the levee, then drop down into the Wildlife Area. The trip begins at the first parking lot (Lot A) on your left, at the beginning of the auto tour. FRS radios and scopes are helpful on this trip.

Saturday, March 12, 8am
Bushy Lake, Cal Expo Floodplain

Leader: Darrell Mohr, 973-9841
mohrdd@gmail.com

Meet Darrell in the cul-de-sac at the south end of Ethan Way, just south of where Hurley Way goes into Gate 12 of Cal Expo. Darrell will be looking for a variety of resident species and Wood Ducks are a good possibility on the lake. This will be a 1 to 2 mile hike that will take 2 to 3 hours. Bring water and sunscreen. This is a great trip for beginners.

Sunday, March 13, 6:15am-11am
Note: Daylight Savings Time begins
Deer Creek Hills Preserve
Leader: Mark Martucci, 833-6722
matuchbirdman@yahoo.com

Deer Creek Hills is a private preserve and working cattle ranch located in Eastern Sacramento County. The 4500 acres of grasslands and Blue Oak habitat should provide us with a nice variety of bird species. As a courtesy, a donation to the preserve of \$10 per person is greatly appreciated. Meet Mark at the Park and Ride on Highway 16 and Sunrise Blvd at 6:15am.

Wednesday, March 16, 8am
Buck's Creek Trail/Serrano Parkway, El Dorado Hills
Leader: Maureen Geiger
444-0804, 281-6652
mkgeiger@comcast.net

Join Maureen for a leisurely walk through this riparian habitat and look for resident and wintering species such as woodpeckers, nuthatches, towhees, wrens, bluebirds, warblers, marsh birds and sparrows. In this varied habitat, there is always the possibility of unusual finds. Meet at the southeast corner of the intersection of Silva Valley Parkway and Serrano Parkway. To reach this

Field Trips continued on page 4

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spot, exit Hwy 50 at El Dorado Hills Boulevard and turn right. Pass the large Raley's shopping complex and turn right onto Serrano Parkway, then right again at the bottom of the hill onto Silva Valley Parkway and park.

Saturday, March 19, 8am
Sailor Bar, American River Parkway
Leader: Ben Graber, 844-8682
Bgraber984@gmail.com

Join Ben for a morning walk checking out the resident birds and looking for early nesters and spring migrants. Meet him at the boat launch parking area at the very end of the entrance road. This is a good trip for beginners. Sailor Bar is at the south end of Illinois Avenue, off Winding Way, just west of Hazel. A Sac County Park Pass or \$5 entry fee is required for all vehicles.

Sunday, March 20, 8am
Sacramento Bar
American River Parkway
Leader: Paul Cordero, email preferred
pkcordero@gmail.com, 454-4061

On this morning walk along the American River, you will see, and hear, a nice variety of resident birds and maybe a few early spring migrants. Paul will focus on finding and identifying birds by ear. This is a great trip for beginning and more experienced birders. From Highway 50, drive north on Sunrise Blvd; turn left on Fair Oaks Blvd and take the first left on Pennsylvania. A Sac County Park Pass or \$5 entry fee is required for all vehicles.

Tuesday, March 22, 9am
Effie Yeaw Nature Center
Leader: Cathie LaZier, 457-6882
empid@earthlink.net

This area of the parkway is excellent for birding and Cathie will be looking for early nesting birds and returning migrants, as well as blooming wildflowers. This is a very good trip for beginners. Meet in the Nature Center parking lot in Ancil Hoffman Park in Fair Oaks. The trip will end by noon. A Sac County Park Pass or \$5 entry fee is required for all vehicles. For directions, see sacnaturecenter.net.

Saturday, March 26, leaving at 7am
South Yuba River State Park
Covered Bridge Area
Leader: Richard Barbieri, 761-1124
Offleash56@yahoo.com



Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Kirsten Munson

Bridgeport and South Yuba River State Park are located eight miles north on Pleasant Valley Road from the Intersection of Pleasant Valley Road and State Route 20 west of Grass Valley.

This area is spectacular during the spring for birdlife and wildflowers. We will bird trails near the visitor center and portions of the Point Defiance Trail. We'll look for Yellow-breasted Chat, Bullock's Oriole and Canyon Wren. Along the river portion of the Point Defiance trail, Golden Eagle and American Dipper have been spotted. The Black Oak woodland north of the river supports a variety of woodpeckers. The trails are adorned with plenty of poison oak, so dress appropriately. This trip lasts into the afternoon. Pack a lunch and bring plenty of water for the hike. Sturdy shoes and protective clothing are essential for the trails. Meet at the Park and Ride on Horseshoe Bar Road in Loomis, Exit 110 off I-80. We will leave the Park and Ride at 7am, so arrive a little early.

Sunday, March 27, 7:30am
Mather Field Park
Leader: Wayne Blunk, 876-0457
wayne.blunk@gmail.com

Mather Lake is one of Wayne's favorite birding locations. The lake and its surrounding grasslands host a wide variety of birds. Great-tailed Grackle and Yellow-headed Blackbirds both nest at the lake. Meet Wayne in the parking lot of Mather Regional Park at the corner of Douglas Road and Zinfandel for this morning trip. A Sac County Park Pass or \$5 entry fee is required for all vehicles.

Wednesday, March 30, 8am
Falcon Crest, El Dorado Hills
Leader: Craig DeMartini, 599-3300
cloudwalk7@icloud.com

Let's check out this new location and see if it lives up to its name! We will be scouting the oak woodlands and floodplains of Folsom Lake (and the lake itself, depending on how far the water level has risen). We'll keep our eyes open for eagles and osprey

as well as smaller passerines, woodpeckers, and water birds. Early nest builders should be active (hawks and hummingbirds). We'll explore the mouth of Sweetwater Creek where a pair of Rock Wrens can usually be found. We will not ignore the auditory clues of songs and calls, nor the non-avian species, the tracks/trails, spore and scat, plant identification, geography and meteorology at this new locale (help is appreciated). Meet at the Falcon Crest turnout parking lot, off Salmon Falls road. From Sacramento head east on Highway 50 towards Placerville. Take the El Dorado Hills Blvd exit #30B, and go north on El Dorado Hills Blvd for approximately 10 miles. After you cross Green Valley Road, El Dorado Hills Blvd becomes Salmon Falls Road. Continue on Salmon Falls for 3 miles to a large dirt parking lot on the left with a large wooden sign that reads "Falcon Crest". Use caution when crossing oncoming traffic and driving into the parking lot.

Saturday, April 2, 7am
Putah Creek Riparian Reserve
Leader: Gary Fregien, 708-0636
calaveri.gary@gmail.com

Join Gary on a trip featuring spring migrant and resident birds. As the name implies, this area includes water and riparian habitats, and draws spring migrants and resident nesters. We can expect passerines including flycatchers, sparrows, thrushes, warblers, woodpeckers and wrens. There will also be forest hawks and river ducks. We will be hiking along Putah Creek on a narrow dirt path for up to a mile. Expect to bird for 3-4 hours. There are tables along the creek for having lunch. Meet at the Park and Ride in West Sacramento. From Sacramento, take the West Capitol Ave, Exit #81; turn left at the light and then left again into the Park and Ride lot.

Sunday, April 3, 8am
William Pond Park
Leader: Mark Martucci, 833-6722
matuchbirdman@yahoo.com

This area of the American River Parkway offers a variety of habitats and can turn up some surprises. Mark will be checking the backwaters of the river and the fishing pond as well as the developed park area for late wintering birds and migrants. Meet him just past the entrance kiosk for this half day trip. A Sac County Park Pass or \$5 entry fee is required for all vehicles. From the intersection of Fair Oaks and Arden, follow Arden east and it runs into the park.

Wednesday, April 6, 7:30am
Glenn Hall Park, Paradise Beach,
American River Parkway
Leader: Sally Walters Schmoltd
710-1077, bajaowl@gmail.com

Join Sally for a morning bird walk along the levee and willow covered sand bars of the American River. Sally will be looking for migrants and resident breeding birds, wrens, towhees, and other small passerine birds. From Highway 50 take Howe Ave north to Fair Oaks Blvd. Turn left onto Fair Oaks and cross over the American River. Turn right on Carlson Ave, which is the first stop light past the American River bridge. Continue on Carlson Ave to its end, at Glenn Hall Park. Meet on top of the levee. This will be a fairly easy walk, but expect some uneven terrain, gravel, sand, and rock cobble. This is an excellent trip for beginners. Sally will lead this walk again at the end of the month; come with her and see the seasonal changes.



Wood Duck
Linda Pittman

Saturday, April 9, 7:30am
Mather Field Park
Leader: Wayne Blunk, 876-0457
wayne.blunk@gmail.co

Celebrate Spring at Mather Lake with Wayne. There should be a good variety of singing and nesting birds, and Wayne will help you locate them. Meet in the parking lot of Mather Regional Park at the corner of Douglas Road and Zinfandel for this morning trip. A Sac County Park Pass or \$5 entry fee is required for all vehicles.

Sunday, April 10, 7am-noon
Pine Hill Preserve Birding
Leader: Chris Conard
Pre-registration is required through
Pine Hill Preserve
Contact: Graciela Hinshaw,
ghinshaw@blm.gov
www.pinehillpreserve.org

The preserve was established to protect rare native plants in El Dorado County that occur only on the specialized soils of the Pine Hill area. It stretches from Folsom Lake in the north to Hwy 50 in the south and contains more than 4,000 acres. We plan to visit newly acquired land in Kanaka Valley, with a mix of oak woodland and chaparral. We'll look for California

Thrashers, Sage Sparrows, migrating warblers, and, on a clear day, great views of the Sierra and the surrounding geography. Be prepared for three miles of moderate walking.

Thursday, April 13, 8am
Sweetwater Creek
Leaders: Tim Fitzer and Ann Burris

Tim: 870-5207,
spskua2@comcast.net
Ann: 947-7573, burris.
nellieann@gmail.com

At this favorite spring hotspot you should find wild flowers in bloom and hear the song of the Yellow-breasted Chat. Other possibilities are Lazuli Buntings, Wrentits, California Thrashers, migrating hummingbirds, and colorful warblers. Meet at the Bella Bru in the shopping center on the northeast corner of El

Dorado Hills Blvd and Highway 50. 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. This will be a half day trip and is a good one for beginners.

Saturday, April 16, 10:30
Effie Yeaw Family Nature Walk

Join Audubon birding leaders Sheila Green and Sue Darst and a Nature Center docent for a family friendly nature walk at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center in Carmichael. Acorn Woodpeckers, Wild Turkeys, and other resident birds such as towhees and Bushtits will be active. Reservations are not needed, families can simply show up and enjoy a one-hour walk in the lovely Nature Area with naturalists/birders who know the area and enjoy sharing their knowledge. For directions, see sacnaturecenter.net.

BUFFERLANDS **ROOKERY TOUR**

Saturday, March 19, 9am-12 noon
SRWTP Bufferlands

Come and experience an up-close view of a nesting colony of herons, egrets and double-crested cormorants. These beautiful birds nest in communal groups, high in the riparian forest. This area has more than 150 nests.

The meeting location is weather-dependent, so please contact Roger Jones at jonesro@sacsewer.com the week preceding the event for exact meeting location and directions.

General Meeting

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Science degree in Evolution and Ecology at the University of California, Davis and earned his Master of Science degree in biology at California State University, Chico. Specializing in threatened and endangered reptiles and amphibians of the Central Valley, Eric Hansen has a lifetime of experience with the giant gartersnake and has focused on this species as an independent consultant and researcher since 1998. With primary interests centering on conservation ecology, Mr. Hansen's collaborative projects have covered a range of interests, including population genetics, contaminants and toxicology, demography, and spatial ecology. Along with his dedicated staff, Mr. Hansen works collaboratively with private firms, NGO's, government agencies, and academic institutions throughout the Central Valley.

Sacramento Audubon meetings are held the third Thursday of the month at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center Assembly Room in Carmichael. The public is welcome. Visit our website www.sacramentoaudubon.org and click on Society Info/Meetings, for further information, including a map and directions. To keep up with current happenings follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/Sacramento Audubon](https://www.facebook.com/SacramentoAudubon).

Sally Walters Schmoltd, Program Chair

2015-2016 SACRAMENTO **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT** **RESULTS**

Sacramento, December 27

Compiler Mark Cudney reported: "The results are finally in! Clear skies with no rain resulted in the highest species count total in the history of the Sacramento Christmas Count. We totaled 169 species smashing our old record of 166 set in 2010. Birds never seen on the count previously included 34 Red Crossbills, 4 Evening Grosbeaks, 1 Iceland Gull, 2 Swamp Sparrows, and one Barn Swallow. Seldom seen birds included 1 Mew Gull, 1 Barrow's Goldeneye, 19 Lesser Yellowlegs, 2 Western Tanagers, 1 Pacific Wren, 1 Western Gull, 10 Violet-green Swallows, 3 Wrentits, 2 Phainopeplas, 2 White-throated Sparrows, and 17 Purple Finches. The only bad misses were Redhead, Horned Grebe, Golden Eagle and this year, unlike the last, Band-Tailed Pigeon. We accomplished this feat with only 57 participants who obviously know their sub-areas very well."

Findings continued from page 2

small group due to weather but the rain held off until the end of the trip and participants saw many of the species that make this area a special place in winter. We saw up to eight Ferruginous Hawks, including one dark morph. Additional raptors included both eagles, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Prairie Falcon, American Kestrel and numerous Red-tailed Hawks. One of the best sightings was water! Several cascades were dropping into the creek and it was flowing fast. The reservoir had more water than in the last couple of years and waterfowl were taking advantage of it (although most were at the far end). A total of 64 species was tallied."

Cosumnes River Preserve (1/20) — Leader Mara Weston reported: "Seven birders joined me on an unseasonably warm morning. We tallied 52 species, with some of the favorites of the day being a Lincoln's Sparrow, Green-winged and Cinnamon teals, Ring-necked Ducks, and three Wilson's Snipes. It was a great morning with a really fun group!"

Robinson Road, Road 113, and Bird's Landing (1/17) — Leader Mark Martucci reported: "Eight birders saw 54 species of birds on a cold, wet and windy day in Solano County. Highlights included Loggerhead Shrike, Rock Wren, Prairie Falcon, Merlin, Ferruginous Hawk, Burrowing Owl, Virginia Rail and Mountain Plover."

Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge (1/16) — Leader John York reported: "We had a very small group visit Colusa and Sacramento Refuges on what started as a foggy morning. Two European Wigeons at the Colusa platform within the first few minutes got the day started. We drove the loop at Colusa, something I have never done on a Sacramento Refuge trip. Good views of avocets and lots of ducks. At Sacramento, the usual suspects were in evidence, Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcons and lots of ducks and geese. It turned into a pretty day, if cool at times, with the great bird spectacle that is usual for Sacramento."

Pete Hayes

BIRD AND BREAKFAST continued from page 1

On Saturday, the Bird Walk will be approximately 90 minutes long, followed by the traditional casserole breakfast buffet provided by some of the best cooks among ARNHA Board members and Nature Center volunteers. Participants can also bid for attractive baskets and experiences in the silent auction.

On Sunday, you can choose to join either a Family Bird Walk, a one hour walk with children 6 or over welcome, or a longer, approximately 90-minute, Adult Bird Walk open to those ages 12 and above. The Sunday event features an excellent pancake breakfast prepared by the Carmichael Kiwanis, and a nature-themed craft activity for children.

Mendocino-based Discount Binoculars will be available on Saturday showing a wide range of binoculars and spotting scopes. They feature over 25 styles of binoculars and scopes, made especially for birding, to compare and test.

Bird and Breakfast often sells out. Reservations are required. Call 489-4918 for information, questions and to make reservations. You can also register online now at www.sacnaturecenter.net/birdandbreakfast16.html.

HELP YOUR KIDS GET INTO NATURE THIS SPRING BREAK

Looking for a fun, active and educational camp for your child? Look no further than Effie Yeaw Nature Center

- Monday, March 21: Squirrel Squad
- Tuesday, March 22: Camp 5: Precious Plants
- Tuesday, March 22: Bird's the Word
- Wednesday, March 23: Butterflies and Blooms
- Thursday, March 24: Great Egg-spectations

There is limited space in each camp so register today at www.sacnaturecenter.net/spring-camps.html.

CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY YOUNG BIRDERS EVENT 2016

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is excited to host their annual Young Birders Event, which will be held July 7–10, 2016 in Ithaca, New York. The Young Birders Event aims to bring together teenagers (students who will be sophomores, juniors and seniors) with a passion for birds who are interested in pursuing a career with birds. The participants will meet people who have successful careers that involve birds in a variety of ways from ornithological researchers to tour leaders, to audio specialists and computer scientists. Among the schedule are two days of field trips and presentations by Cornell Lab of Ornithology staff including professors, researchers, and students. For more information and to apply please visit ebird.org/content/ebird/news/yb2016/. Unfortunately applications are due by March 15 so time is of the essence.

THE TOP 100 BIRDS OF EFFIE YEAW NATURE CENTER:

A Complete How-To for Beginning Birders with Rich Howard

Interested in birds but don't know where to start? This class will introduce the basics of birding, from binoculars to ethics. In four classroom sessions, you will learn the distinguishing marks of the 100 most common birds (spring migration, summer and year-round residents) of Effie Yeaw Nature Center and the American River Parkway. Photos, many of them taken locally, will be supplemented by the sounds birds make, which are often the best way to find and identify birds.

Rich Howard is a native Californian with a lifelong interest in natural history. Since his first Audubon Christmas Bird Count in 1972, he has enjoyed seeing birds on all seven continents. Rich and his wife Mary, an Effie Yeaw Nature Center docent, have been residents of Carmichael since 1988. Rich retired from environmental consulting in 2013 and has been birding at Effie Yeaw Nature Center almost every week since then.

Recommended for ages 14 and up. The field trips are no longer available but there are still the Seminars which you can register for (4 total): The cost for the Seminars: \$60 (General admission), \$50 (ARNHA members)

- Mondays, March 21, March 28, April 4, and April 11: 6:30 to 8pm

All seminars will be held at Effie Yeaw Nature Center. Registration can be found online at www.sacnaturecenter.net/ssbeginbirding.html

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED AT WILDLIFE CARE ASSOCIATION

As the busy season in the world of wildlife rehabilitation approaches, WCA is already taking in an increasing number of animals each and every day. If you are looking for an exciting and rewarding volunteer opportunity that will allow you to help wild animals in the greater Sacramento area while also learning a great deal about many different species, please consider volunteering for WCA this year. Your help is greatly needed now more than ever.

We ask that volunteers commit to one 4-5 hour shift at our intake facility one day per week. All training is provided and volunteer opportunities are available seven days a week from 8am to 9pm. There are many different positions available. Not all include direct contact with the animals, for those that want to help but are not comfortable with wild animal interaction.

To find out more information on these or other volunteer opportunities, please contact our volunteer coordinator at wcavolunteers@yahoo.com.

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY GARDEN TOURS

Mark Your Calendars! The 6th annual Gardens Gone Native Garden Tour is scheduled for April 9, 9:30am to 4pm. Sponsored by the Sac Valley chapter of the California Native Plant Society, this free garden tour features twenty-three private native plant gardens in the greater Sacramento and Yolo County areas. Many of these gardens are designed to attract wildlife—birds, bees, butterflies and other beneficial insects, as well as to showcase the aesthetic value of California native plants.

Come and see how gardening with California native plants can be a fun and educational experience. Registration is necessary to receive garden descriptions and maps. Registration begins March 11: www.gardensgonenative.eventbrite.com. For more information visit their website: www.Sacvalleycnps.org/gardening/garden_tour.

SAS OUTREACH HELP WANTED!

Spring events are on the calendar and we need volunteers to work at our table. You do not need to be an accomplished birder, just someone who enjoys birding, and talking to people about our field trips and you would work with an experienced volunteer.

Saturday April 9, Return of the Swainson's Hawks, (volunteers scheduled)

Saturday, April 9, Creek Week, Carmichael Park

Saturday, April 16, Wildflower Wonders, California Native Plant Society

Saturday, May 14, Walk On The Wild Side, Beech Lake

Saturday, May ?, North Laguna Creek Park, Elk Grove, Sacramento Start program

Saturday/Sunday, July 9-10, Wildlife Art Festival

Saturday, August 6, Harvest Day Festival

If you can work a morning or afternoon shift on one of the above days, please contact Bill Bianco at 372-3318 or 889-4849.

Birding and Nature Events

OLYMPIC BIRDFEST 2016, SEQUIM, WASHINGTON

From **April 15-17** the 13th annual Olympic Birdfest will take place in **Sequim, WA**. The festival offers a most spectacular setting where you can visit the rain shadow of the Olympic Peninsula to discover the birds of the coastal Pacific Northwest. Pre and post-festival trips are also offered in this fascinating area. More information can be found at www.olympicbirdfest.org.

GODWIT DAYS, ARCATA

The 21st annual Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival is being held **April 13-19** in Arcata, CA. Godwit Days is a week long, spring migration bird festival celebrating California's North Coast. The northern coast of California offers towering redwoods, rocky ocean coasts, wild river valleys, expansive mudflats on Humboldt Bay, and the world-renowned Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary, where over 270 species of birds have been sighted. Held at the peak of spring migration, shorebirds abound and special opportunities are planned to see many other species, including Marbled Murrelet, Spotted Owl, and Snowy Plover and even whale watching. Further information can be found at www.godwitdays.org or call 1-800-908-WING.

POINT REYES BIRDING AND NATURE FESTIVAL

Save the dates of **April 22-24** for the Bay Area's best birding and nature extravaganza! Enjoy birding at the height of spring migration with some of the best naturalists around. For more information and to sign up for their email newsletter, visit www.pointreyesbirdingfestival.org. Tickets are scheduled to go on sale in February, and all proceeds benefit the habitat conservation work of the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin.

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT HALFTIME REPORT 2016

A message from Cornell Lab and eBird: Thanks to all of you who have been out counting birds around the world, despite the wacky weather in some parts of North America—sub-zero temperatures in the Northeast and an abnormal blast of heat along the West Coast. As of midday on Sunday, February 14, (Eastern U.S. time zone) we have received checklists from about 110 countries, including Australia, Kuwait, Iceland, India, South Africa, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Turkey, and many more.

Statistics for 2016 as of February 18

Checklists Submitted:	14,9612
Total Species Observed:	5,283
Total Individual Birds Counted:	16,841,077

California News: Two California locations on the 18th of February were listed in the top 10 Hotspots for the United States: San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary and Merced NWR. Following them in the Hotspots category for California is the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. California is first in the nation for the number of species at 363 followed by Texas. For all the latest news on the count go to gbbc.birdcount.org.

SACRAMENTO AUDUBON FUTURE PROGRAMS

2016

- April 21** Ed Harper, *Birding Alaska*
May 18 Lou Regenmorter, *Birds
Seen in Saudi Arabia*

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!

Carol Baker, Jon Beck, Bill Bianco, Nancy and Bill Bittner, Lucy Boehm, Milton Briggs, Joan L Clark, Stephen Coughran, Charles Derby, Rita Dorey, Marcia Ferkovich, Claudia Funari, Jennifer Garland, Larry Hickey, Marti Ikehara, Maria Nicholas Kelly, Brad Lael, Brian Wayne Miller Sonja Sorbo, Bruce Swinehart, Carolyn Woodruff, Nancy Woody, and Lili Yee made donations to the **General Fund**.

Ann Burris, Subhash Chand, and Sonja Sorbo made donations to the **Conservation and Education Fund**.

The Board of Directors would like your help in raising \$15,000 for Education and Conservation projects in 2015-16. Please donate generously.

DONATIONS AND MEMBERSHIP ARE NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE AND BECOMING VERY POPULAR

You can now charge donations to SAS on your credit card or via PayPal on the SAS website. You may make either one-time or recurring monthly donations in any amount at sacramentoaudubon.org/payments.html. Many smart people have already taken advantage of this for both donations and membership. You may also donate directly to our Bobelaine Sanctuary fund on the web site. Note please that the Board of Directors would also like your help in raising \$15,000 for Education and Conservation projects in 2015-16. Please donate generously.

THE BEST BIRD WEBSITE?

At www.birds.cornell.edu there is a wealth of information about birds available to all. There is current news, bird identification help, links to the Macauley Library of 100,000 bird sounds and their YouTube channel with bird videos. Classes and membership are available for a fee. Search at the very bottom of the home page for links to events, workshops, bird cams and any number of other bird interests. A link for eBird can also be found there.

SEE THE LATEST SAS ACTION ON FACEBOOK

facebook.com/SacramentoAudubon



Sacramento Audubon Chapter Board Meetings

Board Meetings of the Sacramento Audubon Society are held the last Tuesday of the month. The next meeting will be on March 29, 2016 at 7pm. Board meetings are held at the Lemon Grass Cafe Meeting Room, 601 Munroe St, Sacramento, 95825.

Minutes of Board Meetings can be found online at sacramentoaudubon.org/societyinfo/archives.html. Scroll down to Board Minutes.

Seasonal Observations

January 1 to January 31

Rare and Unusual Bird Reports www.cvbirds.org/ListServ.htm

With the tail end of the Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) and periods of nice weather, there were a lot of observers in the field producing many reports of interesting birds. Among the waterfowl, a **Eurasian Green-winged Teal** was reported at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area (YBWA) on 1/3, and five **Surf Scoters** were found in Sacramento County on the San Joaquin River off of the Sherman Island East Levee Rd on 1/1, with reports continuing through 1/8. Impressive raptor numbers have been reported in recent years near Plainfield Elementary by Yolo County Rds 97 and 25A, and on 1/2, 25 **Red-tailed Hawks**, including one dark **Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk**, and six **Ferruginous Hawk** were found there. A **Swainson's Hawk** near Lake Solano on 1/26 was an interesting report, and a beautiful dark morph **Rough-legged Hawk** was reported throughout the month along Riley Rd north of Galt.

Mountain Plovers used to be more common in Yolo County than in recent years, so reports from two sites were encouraging: eight were found northeast of Davis near Rds 102B and 27 on 1/2, with as many as 12 reported through the second week of January, and a single was found near Plainfield Elementary on 1/23. A **Pacific Golden-Plover** was reported from YBWA from 1/3-9. An adult **Glaucous Gull** found at Cosumnes River Preserve (CRP) from 1/17-25, initially in a closed area and later along Desmond Rd, was rare for Sacramento County, which has had far fewer records of this species than Yolo County.

Reports of single **Northern Pygmy-Owls** from the Putah Creek Canyon below the Hwy 128 bridge came in on 1/8 and 1/13. A **Long-eared Owl** was flushed from a day roost from private land near Sweetwater Creek on the 1/3 Folsom CBC. Five **Long-eared Owls** were found roosting in an orchard near Putah Creek between Davis and Winters, and five were also found at a closed portion of CRP on 1/4. Up to four **Short-eared Owls** continued in the ag fields along Yolo County Rd

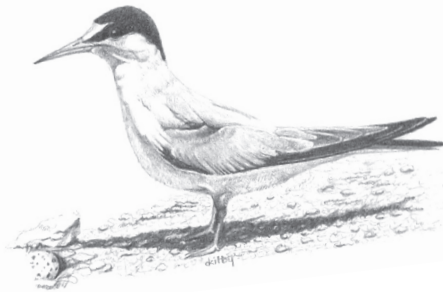
30 northeast of Davis, and four were also seen on Sherman Island Crossing Rd on 1/1. A continuing **Hairy Woodpecker** on 1/3 was a little farther downstream, near the Parkshore Dr access, than reports from Lake Natoma last winter and spring. Just ten miles north of the typical cutoff for this column was a male **Vermillion Flycatcher** found at the Maxwell Cemetery, west of I-5, on 1/23 and seen by many into February. A **Cassin's Vireo** was a nice winter find at UC Davis on 1/26. Two **Steller's Jays** were near Michigan Bar on 1/8 and a single was along Putah Creek downstream of the Hwy 128 bridge on 1/13. It's widely acknowledged that **Common Raven** numbers have been building locally, but a single group of 114 along Riley Rd on 1/4 was astounding. A **MacGillivray's Warbler** found on a closed portion of CRP on 1/16 was likely the same bird found nearby on 11/29 and accounts for one of very few winter records of this species.

The **Black-chinned Sparrow**, exceedingly rare both for the Central Valley floor and for anywhere in the state in winter, last reported on 10/23 was refound

SAS NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to these
new members:

Elizabeth Anderson	Joe Manes
Jack Berger	Kathleen Mikulin
Lucy Boehm	Thomas Murphey
Brant Brumbeloe	Francesca Scalpi
Steven Coughran	Luci Shannon
Lorey DeLaMater	Nicole A Shuman
Rita Dorey	Wayne Thelwell
Claudia Funari	Dale Walton
Margaret Gabil	Nanci Woody
Jennifer Garland	Lili Yee
Linda Latona	



Tern sp.
Daniel Kilby

Observations continued

on 1/14 and continued to be seen and photographed into February. Two **Bell's Sparrows** were found on 1/3 near Sweetwater Creek, where they're likely resident, but often missed on the CBC. An apparent **White-throated X White-crowned Sparrow** was at CRP on 1/16-18. A **Swamp Sparrow** was reported as a brief sighting at the William B Pond access to the American River Parkway on 1/25. **Red Crossbill** reports continued, especially at the Sacramento City Cemetery, with up to 20 reported throughout the month. **Red Crossbills** were also found at the Sutter Cemetery from 12/29 through at least 1/24, and a single and a flock of three were in Folsom on 1/3. Twelve crossbills were also reported at the Mosquito Abatement Ponds on Bond Rd in Elk Grove on 1/4. A male **Lawrence's Goldfinch** at the Sacramento Regional WTP on 1/13-14 was new for the SRWTP/Bufferlands, and eight to twelve **Evening Grosbeaks** were very cooperative in north Davis near Antelope Ave from 1/27 into February.

We feature photos of some of the highlight birds on the Sacramento Audubon Web

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. Please include your email address if you would like to be added to our Action Alert List for letter/email writing on conservation issues.

Sacramento Audubon Society Membership Application

Mara Weston, Membership Chair, mara_weston@yahoo.com
7708 McClintock Way, Sacramento, CA 95828-4321

Date _____ *The Observer* Newsletter \$25 per address \$ _____

Donation for Conservation/Education \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Make checks payable to Sacramento Audubon Society

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP + 4 _____

Email _____

Send address changes to our Membership Chair to help keep down our costs.

site (sacramentoaudubon.org/activities/recent sightings.html).

The Sacramento Area is roughly defined as lying between Hwy 20 to the north, Hwy 12 to the south, and the 1000' contour to the east and west, plus all of Sacramento and Yolo Counties. Many reports first appeared on the Central Valley Bird Club Listserve (cvbirds.org) and in eBird. It is impossible to list everyone, but I want to thank the following for their reports:

Roger Adamson, Stuart Angerer, Keith Bailey, Mark Cudney, Laura Davis, Bruce Deuel, Lily Douglas, Todd Easterla, Bob Ellis, Andy Englis, Gil Ewing, Ted Gilliland, Kevin Guse, Steve Hampton, Ed Harper, Cliff Hawley, Dan Kopp, Jeri Langham, Dan Murphy, Frances Oliver, Ed Pandolfino, Linda Pittman, Jim Rowth, Mark Sawyer, John Sterling, Kirk Swenson, Craig Swolgaard, Ian Taylor, John Trochet, Daniel Welsh, Rick Williams, and Sharon Wisecarver.

Thanks to everyone for their reports—without them, this column would not be possible.

Chris Conard

Mission Statement Sacramento Audubon Society

The mission of the Sacramento Audubon Society is to:

- Promote the protection and scientific study of wild birds;
- Promote the enjoyment and appreciation of wild birds through community outreach;
- Provide, encourage and support environmental educational opportunities; and
- Provide proactive leadership in the conservation of open space in the Sacramento region.

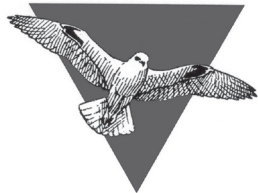
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Editor: Sharon Wisecarver, e-mail, sawise7@sbcglobal.net

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 monthly January through December, except June and August, by the Sacramento Audubon Society.

ATTEND THE NEXT SACRAMENTO AUDUBON PROGRAM

March 17, 2016

Eric C Hansen: *Life history, ecology, and conservation of the giant gartersnake*

At the Effie Yeaw Nature Center, 7pm



Eric C Hansen