

Napa Solano Audubon Society Birding Notes #18

Hello NSAS friends and members –

Summer officially began on June 20. Warm weather and sunny days are ahead. The Red-winged Blackbirds at American Canyon Wetlands have gone from nesting females and loud, noisy males defending their territories to hundreds of recently fledged first-year birds flying back and forth in small flocks and groups. The singing has died away and has been replaced by the sound of the RWBLs calling to each other as they move from one location to another. What changes are you observing with the birds you monitor as the seasons change?

Note #1 –NSAS announcements

1. Just a quick reminder that on June 7, Patti Heidl, our Membership Chair, sent out an email to all NSAS members indicating that it is now “**Time to Renew Your NSAS Membership!**” If you have any question about renewing your membership, please contact Patti at pataheidl@gmail.com.
2. In August we will hold a **planning meeting to develop a 5-year plan for our organization**. If you have recommendations for the projects and programs you believe the Napa Solano Audubon should pursue over the next 5 years, please email your suggestions to Mark Stephenson at napabirder@gmail.com. *If you would like to participate* in this planning effort, please contact either Mark at 707-246-2795 or Tom Slyker at 707-771-1918 for more details about this event.

Note #2 – June Field Trip Reports

1. **Dover Park Heron/Egret Rookery** – Patti and Bill Heidl visited the rookery and discovered “**The Determined Baby Bird.**” Patti has taken the time to write the following story about their discovery. I’m sure you will enjoy it as much as I did.

Unable to make it to Dover Park Heron/Egret Rookery when Ron Brown offered to show NSAS his bird families, we decided to pay a visit one blustery afternoon. We easily found the Egret Rookery, a tall tree whose

wide crown was dotted with many haphazard looking nests that were being buffeted by gusty winds. Adult birds clumsily straddled branches as the young birds were clamoring to be fed.

As interesting as the scene overhead was, Bill called my attention to a young Egret at the base of the tree. The little guy obviously had a keen desire to get back to his nest and family high above us. Perhaps he heard the dinner bell ringing which spurred him on with great urgency to choose his approach. Soon we were watching this awkward and ungainly “Woodstock” looking creature make his way up the trunk of the tree. He used his bill and toes making use of splits in the bark, uneven surfaces, and tree scars as he climbed the trunk much like a skilled rock climber. When an unexpected gust of wind threatened his progress, one wing flew out pressing into the tree as he snugged his body even closer using bill and toes.

The climb was taxing as evidenced by his brief rests and heaving body. We nearly broke into cheers when he finally reached the first major crotch of the tree. There he seemed to stretch and relax, contemplating the next phase of his ascent. Just at that moment, a blast of wind hit with force and our feathered friend was thrown from his perch. Down he fell to the base of the tree. He stood up, feathers askew and looked around, no doubt questioning what had just happened. He looked up the length of the tree trunk and took some cautious steps around the base... searching for the best route. A few more timid steps and once more the trek began.

Mesmerized, we watched his effort and determination. The process up the trunk was similar to the first ascent with occasional challenging gusts of wind that made us question his ultimate success. Not stopping to stretch and relax when he neared the crotch of the tree, this time he pressed on using a different route up another limb. We watched with amazement as he continued to gain elevation in his effort to return home. The goal, though still far away, was clearly in his sights. Perhaps those familiar sounds of family members begging to be fed would encourage him on his way. We chose to depart wanting to believe that this determined baby bird, Woodstock, would soon be reunited with his family.



Betty “Mo” Mosher – participated in the **Dover Park Heron/Egret Rookery Field Trip** on June 6 and took this picture of an immature Snowy Egret that had fallen from the tree and was wandering around in the park. Hopefully this bird was also a “**Determined Baby Bird.**” It was reported that ~ 20 people from the NSAS participated in this June 6th outing.

- 2. Yuba Pass and Sierra Valley** – It wasn’t just the birds that made this trip special. It was the trees (so many trees) and lakes and babbling streams and the *majestic scene of the Sierra Buttes* towering over the Yuba Pass valley. It was the comradery of 16 people who were searching for birds in the Sierras. It was getting away from the coast and getting a chance to be in the mountains after months of being unable to travel. It was a wonderful trip!

For the birding, we saw just over 60 species in the higher elevations around Yuba Pass and another 60 species lower down in Sierra Valley. Some of the species were seen in both locations so our final count was just under 100 at 97 species seen or heard during the 3-day trip. Highlights for Yuba Pass

included the Evening Grosbeaks, the abundance and variety of Warblers, the American Dipper feeding its fledgling on a rock in the river, the White-headed Woodpecker nest with the nestling poking its head out of a hole in a tree, and the call and fluttering flight of a Common Poorwill that answered our calls as we were owling late at night.



American Dipper with food for its young – Photo by Neil Burmester



Evening Grosbeak at a feeder at Bassetts Store – Photo by Neil Burmester

In Sierra Valley we found a Mountain Bluebird and its nest, Green-tailed Towhees, Common Nighthawks, and Wilson’s Snipe. In the marsh lands we found colonies of Yellow-headed Blackbirds, a Wilson’s Phalarope, a richness of Cliff Swallows, and Coots with their tiny young. I had once seen a single Yellow-headed Blackbird, but I had never imagined seeing a reedy marsh full of these yellow-headed birds. It was a treat to see. And the 100’s of Cliff Swallows buzzing under a bridge in the road and then flying around to drop back under the bridge and complete the circle. So many Swallows (one of my favorite birds) buzzing so close together and flying so close to us as we watched was a delight to see.

A special **“THANK YOU!”** is in order for Wendy Cole who did the work to organize this adventure and to Robin Leong, who was the leader for this wonderful trip. Also, Neil Burmester posted some of his photos from the trip in a Google album. You can view the photos by going to this website <https://photos.app.goo.gl/RCAdiz48YfAD2mAS9>.



Wilson's Phalarope in Sierra Valley – Photo by Neil Burmester



Yellow-headed Blackbird in Sierra Valley – Photo by Neil Burmester

Note #3 – Advocacy and Conservation info –

Audubon's Priority Birds 2021 brochure is available at https://nas-national-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/prioritybirdsreport_final.pdf. It documents a listing of birds of concern to the National Audubon organization that will benefit most from their conservation work. This list includes species representing the range of habitats in the Americas where Audubon conservation projects are being implemented. It also documents the variety of projects that are being actively pursued by Audubon to help protect these species. It's worth taking a look at to understand the breadth of activities being undertaken by the Audubon organization.

Note #4 – Video that is worth watching –

If you have time, check out the video at <https://www.pbs.org/video/3-billion-birds-0cnson/>. It is a 25-minute documentary touching on the decline of birds in North America and some of the efforts that are underway to restore and protect native habitat that is so important to bird survival. Much of the video is focused on conservation activity in the eastern U.S. that I was unaware of. **The quality of the cinematography was excellent.**

- If you have ideas for what can be done to make the NSAS a better birding resource for our community or have Birding Notes and/or Pictures to share with the rest of the NSAS community, please send them to Tom Slyker at SolanoBirder@gmail.com.
- Be sure to check the calendar at the NSAS website (<http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/>) for meeting announcements and Field Trip updates.
- This is issue number 18 of our biweekly series. Past copies of Birding Notes are posted on the NSAS website at <http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/>
- If you would like to unsubscribe from receiving all email communications for NSAS, including these Birding Notes, please send your unsubscribe request to SolanoBirder@gmail.com.