

Napa Solano Audubon Society Birding Notes #20

Hello NSAS friends and members –

Breeding season is over. Fall migration has begun. Green-winged Teal have returned in large numbers to the American Canyon Wetlands and White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows will soon be returning to our area. And NSAS is ramping up activities again. It's a great time to be a birder! Hopefully you'll be able to get out and see some of the migrants as they move through the Bay Area.

Note #1 –NSAS announcements

1. Our first members meeting of the Fall will be on **Thursday, September 9 at 7 PM**. This will be a Zoom presentation by Nathan Pieplow who is an Instructor at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He's an avid bird watcher and has written a Field Guide to Bird Songs, as well as Peterson Guides to Bird Sounds of North America. Nathan's presentation is titled "**The Mystery Owl of Mexico,**" where he will share his story of a multiyear adventure to record the first-ever photographs, videos, and audio recordings of the Cinereous Owl. For more details about the presentation and the Zoom Meeting ID and password visit the NSAS website at <http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/Event/21210909-TheMysteryOwlOfMexico>.
2. September Field Trips are:
 - a. Andrew Ford will kick-off the Fall schedule for his weekly Saturday morning Field Trips with **a trip to Putah Creek on Saturday, September 11**. Details about this trip will be circulated to the NSAS Field Trip e-mail list after Labor Day.
 - b. On **Saturday, September 18** Bruce Thomsen will be leading a Field Trip to the Martinez Shoreline. Details about this trip can be found on the NSAS website at <http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/FieldTrip/20210918-MartinezShorelineParks> . The number of participants for this trip will be limited and registration is required. To sign-up email Bruce at: **brucecthomsen@yahoo.com**.

Note #2 – The Joy of Birds –

I was delighted to receive an e-mail from Audubon inviting me to “**Explore the Joy of Birds.**” Their message was “Birds bring us happiness in so many ways—especially in uncertain times. Whether you're just looking for a lift or in desperate need of distraction, look no further than this birdy care package, from Audubon to you.” The link in the email took me to *a website full of wonderful pictures, stories, and articles about birds* that will lift me up and keep me entertained (see the picture below) for a long time. Enjoy this birdy care package at https://www.audubon.org/joy-of-birds?ms=digital-eng-email-ea-x-engagement-20210815-eng-email-joy-of-birds&utm_source=ea&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=engagement-20210815-eng-email&utm_content=joy-of-birds&emci=03a4f625-67fc-eb11-b563-501ac57b8fa7&emdi=39cba473-d1fd-eb11-b563-501ac57b8fa7&ceid=3257812.



Photo of “Gang of Warblers” Mural by Mike Fernandez of Audubon

Note #3 – Western Bluebird nesting boxes report

We had a very successful year with our nesting boxes! On a weekly basis our team of 14 volunteers monitored and maintained 75 nesting boxes in Napa County. NSAS volunteers also supported the monitoring of ~ 50 nest boxes at Lynch Canyon through a program managed by the Solano Land Trust. For the Napa County boxes we came very close to ***fledging 300 baby birds this year*** with 203 Bluebird, 88 Tree Swallow, and 3 Ash-throated Flycatcher babies having survived to fly from their nests. At the end of the season Kelly Pepper took the time to pen this short ode to the nest box residents of Alston Park. Hopefully you will enjoy her story as much as our volunteer team did.

This is an open letter to the Spring/Summer 2021 residents of Alston Park WEBL high rise condos.

As you have all now departed, with no forwarding address and units in disarray, ***there are a few things we want you to know***. We also fluttered over your precious eggs and hatchlings and had restless nights worrying over the numerous hazards and obstacles you faced every minute of every day. *We grieved your loss and cheered and celebrated your success*. Forgive us our abrupt momentary interruptions and thank you for your patience and vigilance as we entered your private quarters. Forgive us our few mistakes. And you two in unit 26, sorry I dumped you...and your cozy nest into a paper bag. You were playing possum too well. Just imagine our delight that our repositioning of you two and your nest, resulted in your successful fledgling a week later. You two tough dudes will surely work your way back to AP next year.

Until then, we wish for you adventurous travels, and safe flight paths as you navigate your way back to us. Good news, bad news - arrive early as housing is scarce here in the hills of Napa, and our directors are considering a first and last month security deposit and cleaning fee.

Since none of you seemed to like the real estate or surroundings at units 32-33, we will be remodeling and have those available by the end of March 2022.

Any complaints or suggestions, contact tcslyker@comcat.net.

Your dedicated guardians,

Wendy, Lou, Kelly



Western Bluebird at American Canyon Wetlands - photo by David Kassel



Tree Swallow at American Canyon Wetlands - photo by David Kassel

Note #4 – A short story about one person’s discovery of birding

“Cheryl Wischhover lives in New York City. She is a former nurse practitioner and currently a journalist.” She’s a good writer and in this article describes how early in the pandemic she was struggling with how to cope when she started to *watch birds*. “I felt a little thrill when I identified this exotic creature as a [Scarlet Tanager](#). This became my “[spark bird](#),” the first one that got me interested in really knowing more about birds.” From that ‘spark’ she goes on to describe how a beginner starts to become a birder. I enjoyed how for her she described birding as *“The hobby is basically Pokémon Go, but for nature.”* Enjoy her story at <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/22557404/best-money-birding-binoculars-bins>.

Note #5 – Input from Birding Notes Readers with information that I was unaware of. Thanks to Dave and Mike for sharing this info with our birding community.

1. Dave McMullen describes himself as an 'inactive' former board member. We need to thank him for the work he did to create our website. Dave’s message was –

My older brother forwarded this video of how a Kestrel holds its head perfectly steady while hunting. I thought it was pretty remarkable, especially when you consider how light a Kestrel is and how easily the wind can push it around. I kept watching it again and again asking myself, "how the hell do they do that?" I can only assume that it must be some very sophisticated adaptation of the nervous system involving the nerves at the base of the feathers detecting every subtle shift in the wind... that "information" about the wind must be incredibly detailed and it is processed *instantly* so that the bird instantly adjusts its wing and tail position but also simultaneously the same information is used to keep the head *rock steady*. It's really uncanny. It's like the bird's head is being held in a bench vise and the rest of the bird is being tossed to and fro... Maybe this is something that everyone has already seen (it is after all coming from a "ViralHog" Youtube channel). But I had never seen it so I'm passing it on.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDRcLAKRZ50>

2. Mike Hall sent this message concerning Las Posadas and Pacific Union College and the opening of a significant amount of new property to public access.

You may be well aware of this, and the news may have gone out to the membership, but I was unaware of it until I finally went back to some undeleted email for a time-wasting browse. The article is a year-and-a-half old, but since the interim has all been Covid Time, others may be as unaware of this development as I was.

Anyone who has had the joy of following Murray Berner on one of his bird walks through Las Posadas will be interested. In addition, I've done two or three CBCs under Bruce Thomsen on PUC land and Las Posadas trails.

https://baynature.org/article/a-surprising-new-forest-to-explore/?utm_source=Bay+Nature&utm_campaign=39af7f4e44-BN+Newsletter+07%2F22%2F2021&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_092a5caaa2-39af7f4e44-199023855&mc_cid=39af7f4e44&mc_eid=c427cef87a

- 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 20 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.