

Napa Solano Audubon Society Birding Notes #24

Hello NSAS friends and members –

Happy Holidays! Hope you had a restful, relaxing, and very birdy Thanksgiving! I wish my holidays could have been more birdy. A month ago, I headed to the hospital for knee replacement surgery and since then I've been homebound. Lots of sparrows and finches at my back yard feeder, but I missed having a chance to see the Bald Eagle that was at the American Canyon Wetlands last Monday or the hundreds of Wigeons that were at Lake Herman on Wednesday. Somehow WCSPs and HOFIs are just not as impressive as seeing an Eagle or a large flock of ducks.

Note #1 – NSAS announcements

1. The Winter 2021 issue of our “Song Sparrow” newsletter has just been published. Lots of good information can be found in this issue. If you haven't seen a copy, be sure to check it out on our website at http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/nsas/newsletters/2021_winter_newletter.pdf.
2. **Christmas Bird Counts are coming!** These events are an excellent way to spend a day of birding while also helping to add to the historical database of birding information that has been collected for each of these count sites. And this year we are bringing back our Christmas Bird Count for Kids! Hopefully you can participate in one or more of these events.
 - **Christmas Bird Count for Kids** (CBC4Kids) will be held on Saturday, December 11. All children ages 7 – 16 are invited to participate. We will be meeting at Connolly Ranch at 9 AM and will finish a little after noon. Full details about this event can be found on our website at <http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/Event/20211204-ChristmasBirdCountForKids> or in our latest newsletter. We ask that you preregister for this CBC4Kids with Tammy Saunders at nsasedcoordinator@gmail.com. Please let Tammy know the number of children, their ages, and the number of adults that will be participating.

- The 74th Benicia CBC will be held on Monday, December 20th. It's a count I've participated in since 2017. I remember my first count when I couldn't even tell the difference between a Raven and a Crow or between WCSP and a GCSP. But I did like to be outside, and it was fun to be birding with others. And, by birding with others I have continuously improved my birding skills since that first CBC. So, whether you are a beginner like I was or an expert birder, there is a need for your help with this year's CBCs, and I'm sure it will end up being an enjoyable day of birding for you. For details about this year's Benicia CBC and how you can participate please **contact Robin Leong** at robin_leong@netzero.net or 707-643-1287.
- The 50th Angwin CBC will be held on Saturday, January 1. This count is centered in Angwin and encompasses a count circle that includes the Napa Valley, Pope Valley, and Lakes Berryessa and Hennessey. Birding on New Year's Day is a great way to start off the New Year! For details about this year's Angwin CBC and how you can participate please **contact Murray Berner** at vireocity@hotmail.com.

3. Field Trips:

- Unfortunately, our last Saturday Weekly Bird Walk with Andrew for 2021 has been canceled. Andrew has been putting in a lot of overtime recently with his work and he will be working again this weekend. With the CBCs and holidays coming in December, there will not be any Saturday walks scheduled for the rest of the year. These walks will start up next year on January 15.
- Rumor has it that there will be **Field Trip on Saturday, January 8 to locations in eastern Solano County** to see Meadowlarks, Hawks, Eagles, maybe some Mountain Plovers, and a plethora of other birds that will be occupying the fields this winter. An announcement with details for this trip should be coming later this month.
- Robin Leong will be leading a **Benicia CBC Pre-Count Scouting Field Trip on Sunday, December 19**. This half-day trip will start at Lynch Canyon parking lot at 9 AM and you will meet Robin there. Robin has negotiated free parking for all participants for this trip. Be sure to get a note from Robin to put on your dashboard before you start the

hike to avoid getting a ticket. For more information about this trip, contact Robin Leong at robin_leong@netzero.net.

4. Monthly Member's Meetings:

- Due to the holidays, we will not be hosting a Member's Meeting in December.
- Hopefully you had a chance to attend the November Meeting with **Keith Hansen** who talked to us from the cozy confines of his studio in Bolinas. His details about the creation of his book "**Birds of the Sierra Nevada**" were both entertaining and at many points had me laughing at the stories he told. If you missed the talk, you can find a link to our recording of Keith's presentation at: <https://youtu.be/bUXXMbU4JwE>. **ENJOY!**
- Our Monthly Zoom Speaker Series will return on **Thursday, January 13th at 7:00 p.m.** Dr. Sam Veloz, Ecoinformatics and Climate Solutions Director for Point Blue, will be speaking on the *impact of Climate Change on bird populations* and how science can help decision makers and natural resource managers prepare for future environmental changes.

5. NSAS outreach –

- **Please welcome Tammy Saunders to the NSAS!** Tammy has been hired to be our Education Coordinator. (See the Winter 2021 Newsletter for full details.) She will be taking over our school program at local elementary schools to teach 4th graders about the wonderful world of birds. She will also be coordinating our CBC4Kids and our beginning bird walks program.
- If you've had a chance to read the Winter 2021 Newsletter, you'll know about the "**New Bluebird Nesting Boxes in American Canyon.**" Stacey Johnson of CAC Parks & Rec just sent me these pictures of the volunteers installing the boxes. Hopefully next spring we'll find 30 – 40 new Bluebirds fledging from these homes.



Note #2 – The Joy of Birds –

1. **“The Rails are Rebounding at Sonoma Creek”** is the headline for a recent article by Audubon California about the success of a local restoration project. Check out the details for this success story at [https://ca.audubon.org/news/rails-are-rebounding-sonoma-creek?ms=ca-eng-email-ea-newsletter-engagement \(ca\) nov 2021 newsletter &utm source=ea&utm medium=email&utm campaign=engagement \(ca\) nov 2021 newsletter &emci=fa7a3581-ce4b-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&emdi=2ee8c7c1-854c-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&ceid=3257812](https://ca.audubon.org/news/rails-are-rebounding-sonoma-creek?ms=ca-eng-email-ea-newsletter-engagement(ca)nov2021newsletter&utm_source=ea&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=engagement(ca)nov2021newsletter&emci=fa7a3581-ce4b-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&emdi=2ee8c7c1-854c-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&ceid=3257812).

2. **Want to put names to bird species you might see?** This Audubon website will help you to get to know 20 of the most common bird species from across North America. It is a quick way to learn about birds that will be common in our location and in other locations across the country. Can you easily ID all these species? Check them out at <https://www.audubon.org/news/get-know-these-20-common-birds>.
3. Audubon CA reports that at this time of year, **Sandhill Cranes are arriving** to spend the winter in protected wetlands and surrounding agricultural lands in the Central Valley after their long migrations from places as far away as Siberia or Alaska. They describe viewing Sandhill Cranes as “nothing short of a magical experience” and I would have to agree. They have recommended these ***4 locations as the top spots see these spectacular birds***. These locations are a short drive from a Napa or Solano location, and it is well worth the time to take a birding day to see the cranes. Be sure to arrive at dawn or wait till dusk to watch and hear the fly out / fly in of these special birds.
 - a. Merced National Wildlife Refuge hosts the largest wintering concentration of Lesser Sandhill Cranes in the Pacific Flyway.
 - b. Staten Island has been a wintering destination for Sandhill Cranes for more than 40 years. The Nature Conservancy protects the island as a place for wildlife-friendly agriculture. The best time to see cranes here is at sunset as they return to their roost sites on the island.
 - c. Pixley National Wildlife Refuge - The foot trail at Pixley NWR is open from sunrise to sunset. The observation deck at the end of the foot trail is the best vantage point to view large numbers of Sandhill Cranes as they fly off and onto the refuge. Bring a flashlight, sturdy comfortable shoes, and layers.
 - d. Cosumnes River Preserve - The best chance to see the cranes is during the day while they feed on the fields. A good day of birding can include the day at Cosumnes looking at the Cranes, Geese, and water fowl, followed by a short trip to Staten Island around 4 PM to watch the Cranes and Geese fly in for the evening. It is special experience to see and hear flight after flight of 100's of Cranes, Geese, and Swans all descending on Staten Island as the sun is setting in the west.



Sandhill Crane by Xianwei Zeng from Audubon 2021 Photography Awards



Sandhill Cranes by Megan Bonham from Audubon 2021 Photography Awards

4. Mark Stephenson thought you would be interested in this Audubon story about Bar-tailed Godwits. It details the GPS tracking efforts underway to discover the details of these Godwit's travels. One bird being monitored flew 8,100 miles in transit from Alaska to New Zealand — ***flapping its wings nonstop for 239 hours without rest***, setting the world record for the ***longest continual flight by any land bird by distance***. For the complete story check out this website <https://www.audubon.org/news/these-mighty-shorebirds-keep-breaking-flight-records-and-you-can-follow-along>.



Bar-tailed Godwit, #4BBRW, with tracker in Australia – Photo by Geoff White Photography

Note #3 – Christmas is coming! Are you looking for a Great Holiday Gift?

If you're looking for Christmas gifts, consider ordering one of the books on our website at <http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/>. This holiday season, we are offering our stunning landmark atlas, ***Breeding Birds of Solano County***, at the discount rate of \$45 plus shipping, as well as Hermann Heinzel's field guide, ***Birds***

of Napa County. You can also find our books at [Alibi Bookshop](#) in downtown Vallejo, [Copperfield's Books](#) in downtown Napa, and [Visit Vacaville](#) in Nut Tree Plaza. These books will make great gifts for both the novice and experienced birders in your life.

- 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 24 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.