



Song Sparrow

Quarterly Newsletter of the Napa-Solano Audubon Society
Volume 36 No. 1 Fall-Winter 2006

For updates and information not included in this newsletter,
check the web site: www.napasolanoaudubon.com

New Meeting Location

We Have Changed Our Meeting Location!!

Beginning with our September 12 meeting, we will meet in Vallejo every month at the **Florence Douglas Senior Center**, 333 Amador St., just a block north of Georgia St. There is plenty of well lit parking area and easy access. We will meet in the Carl Manner Room for most of our programs but will also have use of the kitchen for our December Benicia Bird Count and our June potluck.

Let's carpool! For those living in Napa Valley, contact Cheryl (224-6133) for carpool location. For those living in Fairfield, Vacaville or beyond, contact Alan Moore (372-6878).

General Meeting

Tuesday, Sept 12, 2006 7:00 PM

Program: Darrell Lee Visits Australia

Our September program features Darrell Lee, who will show photos from his May/June 2006 trip to Australia. Darrell, friends, and family designed their own 3-week Australia trip to maximize wildlife and astronomy experiences. They visited the states of South Australia, New South Wales, and south Queensland. Trip highlights included seeing 166 bird species, both Monotreme (egg-laying) mammals, a pelagic birding trip that found nine albatross species, and marvelous views of southern sky sights like the Eta Carinae Nebula and our nearest galactic neighbors, the Large and Small Magellanic Clouds.

Please check our website for the latest news on Napa Solano Audubon: www.napasolanoaudubon.com

Upcoming Membership Meetings

October 10 We'll screen the prize-winning movie ***Desert Gold***, a documentary on California desert wildflowers and the web of life they support. ***Desert Gold*** was one of four environmental short documentary films to screen at the Napa-Sonoma Wine Country Film Festival. ***Desert Gold*** not only celebrates the beauty and rarity of desert wildflowers and the vast web of life they support, but also examines threats to the survival of these immense yet fragile lands ~ and the thousands of migratory bird species who depend upon them.

November 14 Ms. Taldi Walter, Alaska Field Coordinator with National Audubon, will speak on Wild Alaska and its importance to birds and other wildlife, with an update on what's happening in National Audubon's National Policy Office.

2006-2007 NSAS Board Members

President	Cheryl Harris	(707) 224-6133
Vice President	vacant	
Secretary	Pat Hildreth	(707) 252-8928
Treasurer	Janet Renfrow	(707) 255-6780
Education	Pat Hildreth	(707) 252-8928
Webmaster	Dave McMullen	(707) 643-7471
Conservation	Jerry Karr	(707) 643-7089
Publicity	Cheryl Harris	(707) 224-6133
Field Trips	David Takeuchi	(707) 643-5544
Membership	Gordon Schremp	(707) 446-1150
SCBBA / CBC	Robin Leong	(707) 643-1287
At Large	Eric Pilotte	(707) 751-1890
Newsletter	John C. Robinson	(707) 864-8279
Flyway Festival	vacant	
Programs	Darrell Lee	(707) 746-1862

**Napa-Solano Audubon
Field Trip Schedule - 2006-2007**

September 16	Point Reyes
October 14	American Canyon Wetlands
November 18	San Mateo Coast
December 16	Benicia Christmas Count Preview
December 18	Benicia Christmas Bird Count
January 1	Angwin Christmas Bird Count
January 13	Vic Fazio Yolo Wildlife Area
February 2, 3, 4	San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival
February 17, 18	Panoche Valley – San Benito Co.
March 3	Solano Breeding Bird Atlas
March 17	Sunol Regional Wilderness – Alameda Co. Field Trip and picnic
April 14	Mitchell Canyon – Mt. Diablo
April 28	Maycamas (tentative) – Sonoma Co.
May 12	Bodega Bay
June 9, 10	Mono Lake

Unless otherwise indicated, the following applies to all field trips. CARPOOL LOCATION: Vallejo: 7:00 am across from Baskin Robbins in the Wal-Mart Shopping Center.

Bring snacks and liquids, and pack a lunch. It's always a good idea to wear a hat and bring sunscreen. Dress in layers. Don't forget your binoculars.

A reminder from the Field Trip Coordinator: Car-poolers will share driving expenses (recommended \$.30/mi to be split by the number of riders).

**Field Trip to Point Reyes
Saturday Sept 16, 2006**

Coordinator: David Takeuchi, (707) 643-5544

Destination Location and Time: Point Reyes. Meet at the Bear Valley Park Headquarters Visitor Center at 8:15 am. Depending on the weather at the light house and bird sightings, we will bird either Outer Point Reyes or the areas closer to the Headquarters (Olema Marsh, White House Pond, Limatour Beach, Five Brooks). Point Reyes is noted for its fall vagrants.

**Field trip to American Canyon Wetlands
Saturday Oct 14, 2006**

Coordinator: David Takeuchi, (707) 643-5544

Destination Location and Time: American Canyon. Meet at the parking lot at the corner of American Canyon Wetlands and Eucalyptus Drive at 8:00 am. This will be 3-4 hours of morning birding. American Canyon Wetlands is replacing Sandpiper Point for easy wetlands bird watching. The shorebirds and ducks have been coming in since early August. Whether you are a beginning or experienced birder, you will enjoy the bird life. We anticipate walking to the Napa River via the American Canyon Refuse landfill levee.



At left, local author and field guide John C. Robinson leads Bay Area birders on a walk at a local Regional Park. Photo by Dennis Galloway.

Field Trip to San Mateo Coast

Saturday Nov 18, 2006

Coordinator: David Takeuchi, (707) 643-5544

Destination Location and Time: Pescadero Marsh Natural Preserve. There are two parking lots, past the 1st which is across from the large pond and park in the second parking lot after you cross the Pescadero Creek bridge. Meet at 9:00 am. Call David if you are coming.
RAIN CANCELS.

We anticipate birding Pescadero Marsh for water birds and land birds, Pigeon Point for seabirds, Gazos Creek Road for the riparian habitat, and Ano Neuvo State Reserve for beach/sea shore birds and maybe an elephant seal.

Field Trip to Benicia CBC Preview

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2006

Coordinator: David Takeuchi, (707) 643-5544

Destination Location and Time: Solano County Office of Education parking lot, 5100 Business Center Drive, Suisun City. Meet at 8:00 am.

The Benicia Christmas Bird Count is two days later on Monday December 18. In preparation for this annual event, we will be checking out areas of birding interest, and hopefully finding vagrants, which will be included as seen in count week.

Carpool Location: Solano County Office of Education parking lot.

Friday Early Morning Bird Walks in Napa

Join Murray Berner for an early walk (ending well before noon) every Friday morning now through October. Meet to carpool in the Blockbuster Video/Target parking lot off Trancas at 8:00am. See our website for directions www.napasolanoaudubon.com

MEASURE I – a Parks & Open Space District for Napa County –the time is NOW!

- A Napa County Parks and Open Space District will protect & improve Napa county's natural resources today & for generations to come
- A Napa County Parks and Open Space District will create more opportunities for all local residents, children & families to enjoy parks & open space
- A Napa County Parks and Open Space District will work effectively & efficiently by making the most of our existing publicly owned lands. Property rights will be protected because the District cannot exercise eminent domain

Napa County is one of only a few in the State that does not have a County Parks Dept or district. Thousands of

acres of publicly owned land in Napa County are inaccessible or unavailable due to lack of trails, facilities, parking, boat docks, etc. A Parks & Open Space District will mean improved access to the Napa River, lakes & marsh areas for viewing birds while providing better oversight of these natural areas for habitat enhancement and watershed protection.

This measure does not impose a tax. The District will be able to obtain thousands of dollars in grants & other funding that was not previously available to Napa County due to a lack of management capability. This Parks & Open Space District will form partnerships with the local Land Trust, Napa's cities, Napa County, non-profits & other public agencies to protect our natural resources and provide safe access. For more information see www.napaopen.org

Napa-Solano Audubon endorses the passage of this measure – **Napa County residents: Please join us by voting YES on local Measure I.**

Season #2 of Solano County BBA Ends

The second field season of the Solano County Breeding Bird Atlas has ended. Everyone saw lots of birds, beat the heat, and kept impeccable field card data. It is important that atlasers send all field cards, **Birds in Other Areas** forms, and documentation of unusual species to data management by **September 15**. Even if you enter your data at the Patuxent online database, you must mail in your completed field card(s) and documentation. The Patuxent site has an "Incidental Field Form," which may be used in lieu of a paper copy of the Birds in Other Areas form. The sooner we receive all of the 2006 data, the more thorough our preparation for the 2007 season will be. Please make copies for your records of all original data cards and forms. Mail everything to: Murray Berner, 210 Monte Vista Dr, Napa, CA 94559

Members: Our newsletter is only sent quarterly. Please be sure to send your email address to Gordon Schremp (email: gschremp@energy.state.ca.us) if you would like to receive occasional items of interest.

Vote Yes on Prop 84

California is facing enormous population growth in the coming years, with 25 million new residents expected by 2040. But our investment in infrastructure is not keeping pace with our population growth. Current funding for natural resources and environmental protection programs is critically low. In fact, funding for resources makes up less than 1% of the overall state budget. We must make the investments needed to ensure that all Californians will have access to safe drinking water, better protection from floods and opportunities to enjoy parks, natural landscapes and our rivers, lakes, beaches, bays and coastline.

Proposition 84 will provide critically needed funding for programs that will help ensure safe drinking water for all Californians. In addition, Proposition 84 will provide funds to assist each region of California in improving local water supply reliability and local water quality. Also, Proposition 84 will provide funding to develop river parkways, restore and protect urban streams, and keep contaminated storm water runoff out of our rivers, lakes and streams.

Vote YES on Prop 84!

Birding Adventures Program Meets With Huge Success

Our **Birding Adventures** program has been well received in 3rd grade classrooms! Children are shown a 10 minute segment of a video called *Birding for Kids*. It gives them some basics of bird identification and how to attract birds to their yard. We then go for a walk around the school grounds using binoculars. It's wonderful to see children so excited especially when they spot jays, robins, crows, etc. We're always looking for volunteers to help out on these adventures. If interested, please contact Pat Hildreth: pathildreth@pacbell.net or call (707) 252-8928.

Remembering John Wagnitz

Former NSAS Chapter President John Wagnitz passed away suddenly on 2 July 2006. Born in 1944 in Painesville, Ohio, John Carlyle Wagnitz was a former Vacaville resident and son of the late Ventry Emerson and Madge Rosaleen Wagnitz. He graduated from Michigan State University in 1969 and held a certificate of African Ethnology from the University of London, as well as a Juris Doctor from the University of California,

Davis School of Law. His combined active and reserve military duty spanned 34 years. A life-long reader, naturalist, and avid bird watcher, he was affiliated with the Yolo Basin Foundation, the Davis Arboretum, and the Napa-Solano Chapter of the Audubon Society. Please join us in remembering and acknowledging John Wagnitz for his service to our country, the environment, and to our organization.

Second Annual Monterey Bay Birding Festival

An incredible diversity of birds await birders for the second annual Monterey Bay Birding Festival on Sept. 22-23-24.

Highlights of the three-day event include field trips to Pinnacles, Big Sur, the North Coast of Santa Cruz, boat trips on Monterey Bay, talks by renowned avian biologists, and workshops. The field trips are many and focus on the heart of Monterey Bay, such as Elkhorn Slough and the Pajaro Valley.

The evening presentations will focus on bird migration and local bird populations led by Jeff Davis and David Suddjian. Daytime lectures include bird workshops.

For complete Festival information, go to www.montereybaybirding.org for registration, schedule of events, description of field trips, and featured speakers, or call 831 763-5600.

Least Tern Colony Discovered

On July 9, a new location was found in Solano County with breeding Least Terns (an Endangered species as listed by the state and federal governments) and Snowy Plovers (a Federally listed and Threatened species). Given the importance of these species, this site is now entered in the California Natural Diversity Database. On that date, over 110 Least Terns were seen as well as 10 or more Snowy Plovers. Young birds of both species were seen. Subsequent visits on July 23, July 30, and August 6 also found both species present at this location.

The area where these birds were found is located east of Montezuma Slough in the Suisun Marsh. It is on private property, accessible from Shiloh/Collinsville Road south of Highway 12. The property is the site of the Montezuma Wetlands Project, a privately funded project with a goal of restoring farmland to tidal wetlands. As part of the project, dredge spoil from San Francisco Bay

is being used to raise the level of the land so that tidal activity can be restored once the levees are breached. The project is being funded by the money being paid to them for taking the dredge material.

The Least Terns and Snowy Plovers are breeding in this area because the current site is basically a series of dry and wet sandy areas with little vegetation interspersed with small and medium-sized bodies of water. The overall area is a few thousand acres. The Least Tern colony was located on a relatively small area covered with shells that only had small bits of emerging vegetation. On August 6, several similar areas were found on the property, so the potential is there for the Terns to nest in multiple locations on the site. The Snowy Plovers likely nested in the open sandy areas found on the property.

Other birds breeding in the area are American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Killdeer, and Horned Lark. The site became a shorebird haven for migrating birds this summer, with the following species seen on at least one trip: Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, Red-necked Phalarope, Semipalmated Plover, Greater Yellowlegs, Willet, and Long-billed Dowitcher.

Many thanks to Jack Edwards for first spotting a Least Tern in the area in the spring of 2005. Thanks as well go to the organizers of the Solano Breeding Bird Atlas. Without the Atlas, this area may not have been found.

Below, is a photograph of a Killdeer, one of the species breeding at this site. Photo by John C. Robinson



Please check our website for the latest news on Napa Solano Audubon: www.napasolanoaudubon.com

Napa-Solano Audubon Society
P.O. Box 5027
Vallejo, CA 94591



A Day of Birding in Southeast Arizona Like No Other!

Special Submission From Former NSAS Member Tony Battiste

On 7 May 2006, a visiting birder in Mary Jo's yard told me about an experience he and his traveling companions had over the weekend near the campgrounds atop Carr Canyon Rd. Carr Canyon Rd is only 3 miles north of me and the road to the campground is another 7 miles. I tell you this because his experience led to one of the truly GREAT birding/photo experiences of my life. He told me of finding a trickle of water from a spring, about a half mile up a rarely traveled trail. The seep was drawing lots of warblers and other birds. He sounded like he was exaggerating as he related his story. But I was convinced enough to go up there on 9 May. I took 6 rolls of film, but only as an afterthought. His apparent exaggeration was a *monumental understatement*. Believe me when I say, I could have shot 20 rolls. I arrived at about 6:30AM and was amazed to see Townsend's, Hermit, Orange-crowned, Wilson's, and Virginia's Warblers all flitting about and on the ground. Western Tanagers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Spotted Towhee, and Hermit Thrushes were also immediately spotted. Within 15 minutes, I counted no less than 29 species. I ended the morning with 10 warbler species including the afore-mentioned and Olive, Grace's, Painted Redstart, and Yellow-rumped. Western and Hepatic Tanagers, Greater Peewee, Lazuli Bunting, Scott's and Bullock's Orioles, and Stellar's Jay, were other neat birds there.

It was so outstanding that I took my last six rolls of film and returned on the morning of 10 May. They say that an encore can never match the main performance, huh!! Today was ever as good as yesterday. Several times during the two mornings I was there, I had as many as 15 to 20 warblers within 20 feet of me with some as close as 5 feet. I have had some very memorable birding experiences over the 20 plus years I've been a birder, but the past couple days will live on as one of the most remarkable ones of my life.

Napa-Solano Audubon Society
P.O. Box 10006, Napa CA 94581

Dear National Audubon members

Won't you join us as a member of the "Friends of Napa-Solano Audubon Society?"

We appreciate your past support and are looking forward to a very productive year ahead. Please remember that 100% of your annual \$25.00 **Friends** Membership dues will stay with our local chapter to support local birding, local conservation, education, advocacy and local birding science projects.

We have had a very successful past year with many wonderful field trips, programs and events—(see reverse) *AND*, we're looking forward to a wonderful birding season ahead.

Please take this opportunity to upgrade your support of the local activities of our Napa-Solano Audubon Society by joining as a "Friend of Napa-Solano Audubon" today! We look forward to seeing you outside birding and enjoying many of the activities of Napa-Solano Audubon in our beautiful natural areas of Napa and Solano Counties. Also, a special "Friends only" event is being planned for this Fall. Be sure to include your e-mail address so we can send you early notification.

BEST BIRDING!

and thank you for your support.

Cheryl Harris

President, Napa-Solano Audubon Society

Note: if you joined as a Friend of Napa Solano Audubon in 2005 & have not yet renewed for 2006/07, please do so today. *Thank you.*

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FRIENDS OF NAPA-SOLANO AUDUBON SOCIETY

Friend's members receive a quarterly newsletter & invitations to special "Friends" events

NAME _____

EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

Your e-mail address=receipt of updates & reminders about special Friends activities)

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please mail your \$25 check for Friends of the Napa-Solano Audubon Society -
Payable to Napa Solano Audubon Society (NSAS), P.O. Box 10006, Napa, CA 94581

Enclosed is my additional tax deductible gift of \$100 \$50 \$25

Contact me to help with the Solano Breeding Bird Atlas project

I would like information about other volunteer opportunities

2005/2006 Accomplishments of Napa-Solano Audubon

- **Field trips** – we enjoyed wonderful field trips to Malheur and Klamath National Wildlife Refuges, Lake Hennessey and the Napa River Preserve, Skaggs Island, Mt. Vaca, Mines Road, Pt Reyes and more. This summer we are also offering weekly Friday morning bird walks in the Napa area.
- **Programs** – included visits to South Africa, SE Arizona, Churchill Manitoba and beyond. We learned about various bird rescue and research efforts including an excellent presentation about why birds sing and how.
- **Outreach and Education**—we provided hands-on birding programs to 5th grade elementary classes; provided educational information at Farmer’s Markets, Sustainable Ag events, Earth Day Napa Valley and more; We co-sponsored the SF Bay Flyway Festival, led birding walks & gave beginning birding classes.
- **Christmas Bird count** – 84 of our members participated in the 59th annual Benicia Christmas Bird count (177,679 birds of 170 species); a very special sighting was the *Blue Jay*... only the ninth known record in California!
- **California Statewide Burrowing Owl Survey**—we are in our first year of a two year study under the guidance of the Institute of Bird Populations.
- **Heron and Egret studies**—ongoing since 1992 under the Audubon Canyon Ranch’s research program.
- **Testimonials, research data** and assistance on various projects—wind power and its devastating effects on birds, signage for the White Slough area, and more.
- **AND – our Solano County Breeding Bird Atlas project** -- we are currently completing our second year of this 5 year premier project; Fifty members and friends have adopted one or more 5 km x 5 km “blocks” in Solano County. These blocks are then monitored throughout the breeding season to determine which species breed in those areas. A total of 123 blocks must be surveyed. First year results have found an astonishing number of Swainson’s hawk nests, the northern-most breeding record of Cassin’s Kingbird and a wonderful surprise to find that Burrowing owls are still breeding in Solano County! More volunteers are needed for this exciting project – please join us.