



Song Sparrow

Quarterly Newsletter of the Napa-Solano Audubon Society
Volume 38 No. 1 Fall 2007

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

Another Quarter Begins!

Greetings! We are looking forward to a fun & eventful birding season. To launch our fall activities, we are planning a lovely summer evening garden event, Sunday August 26, especially for our Friends members of Napa Solano Audubon. This will be a great time to meet friends, new & old, and share our birding experiences. Please see the enclosed invitation. We have planned a series of fall programs focusing on local areas that are both familiar and new to many of us. We will discover wonderful new places to sit, walk or hike and enjoy birding opportunities in our own communities. Our Saturday field trips offer birding adventures both near & far. We continue to build and install nesting boxes throughout Napa & Solano Counties and are now offering great new educational opportunities for schools and beginning birders. Please join us!

--Cheryl Harris, President

To Our Members

Napa-Solano Audubon (NSAS) has two types of members: National members & Friends members. Those of you who pay your dues to National Audubon Society automatically become members of NSAS, receiving both the Audubon magazine and our local newsletter, the Song Sparrow. You are also welcome to participate in most of the NSAS activities. However, National Audubon sends the local chapters only a very minimal portion of your dues.

In order to **provide support for our local education, conservation and science projects**, we have created a Friends of NSAS membership category. These members receive all of the same benefits as National members but do not receive the Audubon magazine. Additionally, they are invited to special events and field trips open *only* to Friends, and receive discounts on books & other items. Friends memberships run July through June of each year, and ALL of these funds are used for local projects!

If you have not yet joined Friends of Napa-Solano Audubon, or if you have not yet renewed for July '07 - June '08, please do so right away. We hope that you will then join us at our Gathering of Friends event on August 26.

Sunday, August 26, 2007 A Gathering of Friends

Friends members of Napa-Solano Audubon are invited to join us in a beautiful garden setting to thank you for supporting our Chapter's local birding, education and conservation projects.



Wine, fun and hors d'oeuvres

Sunday, Aug. 26, 2007 4:30pm-6:30pm
1913 Silverado Trail, 1/2 mile south of Trancas,
Napa, CA

RSVP to

Cheryl Harris (707) 224-6133
cheryleharris@sbcglobal.net

Or Pat Hildreth: pathildreth@pacbell.net

NSAS Selected Board Members

President	Cheryl Harris	(707) 224-6133
Webmaster	Dave McMullen	(707) 643-7471
Field Trips	David Takeuchi	(707) 643-5544
SCBBA / CBC	Robin Leong	(707) 643-1287

Please check our web site for a complete list of Board members. The Board meets once a month and any member is welcome. Please call Cheryl Harris if you are interested.

Fall Field Trips

Details for the September, October and November field trips are provided in this newsletter, as well as a brief list of other trips for December 2007 and beyond. Unless otherwise indicated, the following applies to every field trip:

COORDINATOR: David Takeuchi (707) 643-5544

Car-poolers will share driving expenses. The recommended rate of reimbursement to the driver is 30 cents per mile, to be split by the number of riders, excluding the driver.

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

Saturday, Sept. 15, 2007 Field trip to Tubbs Island, San Pablo Baylands

DESTINATION LOCATION AND TIME: 8:30 AM at Tubbs Island. To get to the starting location, going west on Hwy 37, make a u-turn at Hwy 121 traffic light and double back going east on Hwy 37 about 1/4 of a mile to the parking lot on the right. It is critical to be on time. The gate is normally locked. However, for this event, it will be opened to let us drive in. We will go in and leave as a group. We will drive 2.5 miles in and walk around the ponds and scope the shoreline. The trip should conclude around 1:00 PM.

CARPOOL LOCATION AND TIME: There is no organized Carpool for this trip, but participants driving from a long distance are encouraged to plan their own carpools.

LEADER: David Takeuchi

TRIP DESCRIPTION: This trip ties in with the General Meeting program on San Pablo Baylands given the previous Tuesday by Christy Smith, Refuge Manager, (see Page 3). We anticipate seeing hundreds of migrating ducks and thousands of shorebirds. Tubbs has a healthy population of the endangered California Clapper Rail. We will have lunch in-the-field.

Saturday, Oct. 13, 2007 Field Trip to Bodega Bay

DESTINATION LOCATION AND TIME: 8:30 AM at the Tides Wharf, 835 HWY 1, Bodega Bay. From Vallejo, take HWY 37 east and exit at Lakeville Road to Petaluma. Turn left on E. Washington Street, follow signs to Bodega Bay, CA 1, and turn North on CA 1 to the Tides. This trip ends around 2:00 PM.

CARPOOL LOCATION AND TIME: 7:00 am in Vallejo, at the usual location across from Baskin Robbins in the Wal-Mart Shopping Center (5180 Sonoma Blvd).

Bodega Bay trip, cont'd

LEADER: Dr. Fred Hanson

TRIP DESCRIPTION: This is a fantastic and unique spot for winter shore and water birds. "With very diverse habitats, this area attracts a wide variety of birds. Along with open ocean and harbor, there are extensive mudflats, beaches, rocky shore, salt marsh at the southeast end of the lagoon, tidal ponds, eucalyptus groves, and varied bushy vegetation."* We will be visiting Doran Park (entrance fee) to view mudflat shorebirds (sandpipers, dowitchers, godwits, plovers), Porto Bodega for water birds (loons, ducks, grebes, Brant's geese, scoters), Bodega Head to view alcids (auks, murre, puffins, guillemots, rock loving birds (oystercatchers, tattlers, turnstones, surfbirds) and cormorants (Pelagic, Brandt's, Double-crested). We will have lunch at the Crab Pot at Spuds Point, known for their award-winning clam chowder.

* excerpt from *Birding Northern California*, by Jean Richmond.

SUNDAY, Nov. 18, 2007 Field Trip to Limantour

DESTINATION LOCATION AND TIME: 9:00 AM at Limantour Beach parking lot (within Point Reyes National Seashore).

CARPOOL LOCATION AND TIME: 7:15 am in Vallejo, at the usual location across from Baskin Robbins in the Wal-Mart Shopping Center (5180 Sonoma Blvd).

LEADER: Rich Stallcup

TRIP DESCRIPTION: We are fortunate to have birder extraordinaire, author, and noted avian teacher, Rich Stallcup, lead us on a field trip. We will walk (gently) around and through various habitats, have lunch in-the-field and be done and back to the cars around 3:00 PM. All on foot about 3 miles total. We will be admiring loons, grebes, brant, scoters, shorebirds and raptors.

Additional Upcoming Field Trips

Check the web site and future newsletters for more details on these other NSAS field trips for 2007 & 2008.

Sat. Dec 15, 2007 Denverton Slough, Fairfield

Sat. Jan 12, 2008 Cosumnes River Preserve and Woodbridge Rd.

Sat. Feb 16, 2008 Palo Alto Baylands

Sat. Mar 15, 2008 Livermore Ranch, Napa Co

Sat. Apr 19, 2008 Castle Rock, Walnut Creek

Sat. Apr 26, 2008 Mayacamas, Sonoma Co

May 14 -16, 2008 Kern River Preserve

Sat. Jun 14, 2008 Archer Taylor Preserve, Napa Gourmet Picnic

General Meetings and Programs

Beginning in September, our General Meetings will continue to be held on the second Tuesday of each month at the same new location: The Florence Douglas Senior Center, 333 Amador St., Vallejo, CA 92590 (just north of the intersection of Georgia St. and Amador St.). Meetings begin at 7 pm with about 15 min of social time with refreshments, followed by announcements & a short period of chapter business (field trip, conservation, and membership reports, etc.) followed by the evening presentation. See below for details on our programs for the September, October and November meetings.

Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2007 7:00 pm San Pablo Bay NWR: "The Not so New Kid on the Block"

San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge is part of the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex. This program will be presented by Christy Smith, Refuge Manager for the San Pablo Bay unit, and Jerry Karr, long time Napa-Solano Audubon member. Jerry is also President of The Friends of the San Pablo Bay NWR, an organization of Bay Area residents who provide support to the refuge. Christy will give details about the refuge location and boundaries. Cullinan Ranch, and Lower Tubbs Island are but two of the units of the San Pablo Bay NWR. Christy will also provide an update on the US Fish and Wildlife Service's 15-Year Comprehensive Conservation Plan, with suggestions about how we can help guide the planning...

Tuesday, Oct. 9, 2007 7:00 pm The Solano Land Trust

Wide open spaces are a dominant characteristic of the Solano County landscape, but with California's population expected to grow by 11 million new residents by 2030, open space preservation cannot be taken for granted. Solano Land Trust has been in the vanguard of protecting Solano County's open space since 1986. To date, SLT has permanently protected 19,104 acres of natural areas and agricultural lands while also stewarding the diverse and important habitats and species on those properties, including many that are threatened and endangered.

Marilyn Farley, Executive Director, will help us learn more about access to and birding on some of the Land Trust's major properties: Lynch Canyon, King-Swett Ranches, Jepson Prairie & more. Hear about the beautiful new Nature & Education Center at Rush Ranch. Mark your calendar for Sept. 29: the **Rush Ranch Heritage Feast**.

Marilyn Farley has a master's degree in public administration from the University of Southern California and served as a

Peace Corps volunteer in Guatemala. She also serves on the Fairfield City Council.

Tuesday, Nov. 13, 2007 7:00 pm Important Bird Areas and You

The Important Bird Areas Program is a global effort to identify and conserve habitat vital to birds and other biodiversity. This program identifies critical sites that provide essential habitat for one or more species of bird. In California, such sites must be less than 100,000 acres in size, possess a bird community distinct from the surrounding region, and meet additional criteria. A site's designation as an Important Bird Area is a powerful distinction which can be utilized to leverage conservation efforts.

Mike Perlmutter, San Francisco Bay Area Conservation Coordinator for Audubon California, will speak in depth about the Important Bird Areas program and highlight Napa and Solano County's designated Important Bird Areas: Benicia State Recreation Area, Jepson Grasslands, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, San Pablo Bay Wetlands, Suisun Marsh, Lake Hennessey and Lake Berryessa.

NSAS Provides Support to Statewide Burrowing Owl Survey

Once considered "abundant" and "common" throughout the state, the Burrowing Owl has been declining in most regions of California since the 1940's. The California Department of Fish and Game listed the Burrowing Owl as a "Species of Special Concern" in 1992, and contracted with The Institute for Bird Populations (IBP) to conduct a statewide survey, which concluded in 1993. Thirteen years later, IBP recently began a follow-up Burrowing Owl survey. Up-to-date information on the locations and concentrations of breeding owl pairs is critical in order to target future conservation efforts where they will do the most good. Hopefully this new survey will also shed light on regional population trends, how the species distribution may be changing and why.

See "Burrowing Owls" next page...



A pair of Burrowing Owls discovered on the Timm Ranch in northern Solano County. Photo by Dave McMullen

Burrowing Owls, continued

The IBP survey is exactly the kind of conservation science that NSAS likes to support! IBP depends heavily on volunteers from local Audubon chapters. Fortunately, the IBP study uses the same 5 km square "blocks" that we use for our Breeding Bird Atlas project. Many of our Solano County Breeding Bird Atlas volunteers have been recruited to help gather data for the Burrowing Owl study.

NSAS members Robin Leong and Murray Berner are regional volunteers to coordinate gathering data for Solano and Napa counties, respectively. If you have any information about Burrowing Owls breeding or wintering in new locations, be sure to let them know!

--Dave McMullen

Bird Box Project Call for Volunteers

This year NSAS launched an exciting new project to distribute over 200 nesting boxes on public and private land throughout Solano and Napa counties. The goal of the Community Nesting Box Project is to increase the breeding bird pairs in Solano and Napa counties while increasing our contact with the community and stimulating interest in the Solano County Breeding Bird Atlas. Several workshops took place to assemble bird boxes, but additional volunteer help is needed to make sure the remaining boxes are assembled and put up well before the 2008 nesting season. Karen Sheldon is the Project Leader. Residents or organizations interested in assisting with the project can contact Karen at nsas_birdboxes2007@pacbell.net.

Update on the Solano County Breeding Bird Atlas (SCBBA)

At the close of the 2007 field season our greatest accomplishment is the completeness of coverage of Atlas blocks throughout the county. While dedicated atlasers covered the western one-half of the county during the first two seasons, there were big gaps in the east. Excellent people committed to the completion of the Atlas filled most of those gaps this year. Challenges for 2008 include reaching remote parts of the Suisun Marsh and islands in the Sacramento River.

The early end to the rainy season prompted early nesting; therefore, atlasers achieved a great deal before the summer heat took hold. Highlights from around the county include fledgling Golden Eagles in Lynch Canyon; Peregrine Falcon nesting at the Napa River; and Pileated Woodpecker and Grasshopper Sparrow found in unexpected areas. The Institute for Bird Populations' Burrowing Owl study helped lure new atlasers into the field while finding several interesting concentrations of owls. Although not surprising,

five I-80 overpasses held nesting White-throated Swifts. The season's best discovery was our first ever breeding Say's Phoebes. A pair fledged four young on the Eastern Swett Ranch.

Finally, birders got together frequently this summer for atlasing field trips, visiting such exotic locales as Birds Landing, the English Hills and Timm Ranch. They were a highlight of the season. With the continued dedication of everyone involved, there will be much, much more of the same in 2008.

--Murray Berner

Sunday, Sept. 2, 2007 2:00 pm SCBBA End-of-Season Potluck

For volunteers in the Solano County Breeding Bird Atlas, or anyone new who may be interested in learning more about it, Uzelle Williams has kindly consented to host a barbeque and Potluck at her home. If you can attend we would love to see you! Please bring your data (even if you have already entered it on-line), pictures, your best BBA stories, a dish (and what ever to BBQ) and appetite!

Please RSVP to Uzelle Williams
(707) 864-8635 uzelle1@comcast.net

Ask Uzelle for directions if you did not already receive them in the emails that went out.

If you are not able to attend, please send and/or input your data by September 15. Mail all original data to Murray Berner at 210 Monte Vista, Napa, CA 94558. --Robin Leong

Spencer Creek Journal

*Nature notes from four hilly acres by Spencer
Creek in Napa's southeastern foothills*

By Ann Smith, Napa-Solano Audubon Society

SPRING 2007. First of the wildflowers to bloom, milkmaids produced tiny flowers early in February. A Turkey Vulture settled on the deck railing for an hour, looking seriously out of place.

March brought a White-throated Sparrow to dash in and out of low vegetation. Two Townsend's Warblers brightened the trees with their brilliant yellow markings. Oak Titmice and White-breasted Nuthatch pairs which had settled in nest boxes were upset when Violet-green Swallows arrived and buzzed both birdhouses, checking to see if anybody would vacate for them; nobody did. Anna's Hummingbirds quit guarding feeders and took up making long j-shaped dives over the females. Rufous and Allen's hummers arrived in small numbers, with the aggressive Rufous leaving shortly for the mountains and a few Allen's staying to breed.

See "Spencer Creek Journal" next page

Spencer Creek Journal, continued

By April, bird song was everywhere. Turkeys gobbled, quails called "Chicago," and woodpeckers added their drumming to the mix. Buttercups bloomed. A pair of Pileated Woodpeckers called to each other across long distances. Varied Thrush peered out from deep concealment. Screech-owls hooted at night and two Gray Foxes were seen about dusk each evening. Hooded Orioles arrived, and winter's Golden-crowned Sparrows hadn't yet left but soon would.

The vixen fox was nursing young by May. Turkeys were very attentive to the welfare of their fluffy chicks. Spring's first Black-headed Grosbeak was here on May 10. Deer gave birth to their young and brought them in the yard. Late in the month, a bobcat crossed the lane about noon, and an Ash-throated Flycatcher called.

SUMMER 2007. In early June, the dog fox brought in two very active kits. A deer with a tiny, spotted fawn constantly drove off last year's teenager, which wasn't eager to be alone. Tree swallows nested near the lane, hard to spot as they flew straight into their bird box. Juvenile grosbeaks gave their peculiar rising whistle to solicit food from the adults. Two Vaux's swifts were overhead near dusk, their scimitar wing shape different from swallows' wings.

Brush-cutting to improve fire safety disturbed the foxes, and the family was not seen after early July. Anna's and a few Allen's hummingbirds piled up at the feeders, consuming two quarts of sugar water daily. A pair of Golden Eagles flew overhead, pursued and even struck by crows. A male California quail, defending seven downy chicks, flew directly at a Wild Turkey and then a Scrub Jay when each threatened the tiny chicks. That show of ferocity encouraged both to move off. Spencer Creek, which flows year-round, continued to provide water for all.

Attention Teachers

Are you an elementary teacher or do you know of others who might have an interest in adding a birding unit to their curriculum?

Our Education Committee has assembled kits that can be loaned out on a limited basis to teachers at schools in Napa & Solano counties. The kits include a DVD with photos & information about our local birds, a video "Birding for Children," samples of nests & feathers, recommended games and activities, and more.

Also, the "Audubon Adventures" series will be offered to a limited number of classrooms this year. For more information, please contact: Pat Hildreth
pathildreth@pacbell.net



"Wow, I see it now"

FRIENDS of the NAPA-SOLANO AUDUBON SOCIETY

100% of *Friends of the Napa Solano Audubon Society* membership dues remain in our local chapter to support local birding, local conservation education and advocacy, and local birding science.

\$25 individual or \$35 family. Please JOIN or RENEW by completing the following:

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____ (receive timely reminders or notification of events)

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

- Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.
- I prefer to receive my newsletter by e-mail ONLY.
- I am enclosing an additional _____ donation to support citizen science and educational projects.

Make your check payable to "Friends of NSAS"

Mail your check and this form to: Napa-Solano Audubon Society P.O. Box 10006, Napa, CA 94581

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



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The Attack



Swainsons Hawk being harassed by a Western Kingbird
Photo by Dave McMullen

Event Calendar At-a-Glance

- Sun. Aug. 26** A Gathering of Friends event in Napa
- Sun. Sep. 2** SCBBA End-of-Season Potluck
- Tue. Sep. 11** General Meeting in Vallejo
- Sat. Sep. 15** Field Trip to Tubbs Island
- Tue. Oct. 9** General Meeting in Vallejo
- Sat. Oct. 13** Field Trip to Bodega Bay
- Tue. Nov. 13** General Meeting in Vallejo
- Sun. Nov. 18** Field Trip to Limantour.
- Tue. Dec. 11** General Meeting in Vallejo
- Sat. Dec. 15** Field Trip to Denverton Slough, Fairfield
- Mon. Dec. 17** Benicia Christmas Bird Count
- Tue. Jan. 9** General Meeting in Vallejo
- Sat. Jan. 12** Field Trip to Cosumnes River Preserve and Woodbridge Road

Please check the website if you can for any last-minute updates regarding our events. www.napasolanoaudubon.com