



# Song Sparrow

Quarterly Newsletter of the Napa-Solano Audubon Society  
Volume 37 No. 1 Spring 2007

For updates and information not included in this newsletter,  
check the web site: [www.napasolanoaudubon.com](http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com)

## New Meeting Location

Our monthly meetings now take place in Vallejo at the **Florence Douglas Senior Center**, 333 Amador St., just a block north of Georgia St. 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).

## Upcoming Membership Meetings

**April 10 at 7 pm.** Sanford "Sandy" Wilbur was the leader of the California Condor recovery effort from 1969 to 1981. This was the period when the decisions were being made to begin the current captive breeding and reestablishment program. Using color slides and readings from his recent book, "Condor Tales: What I Learned in Twelve Years with the Big Birds," Sandy talks about the condor, how it became endangered, and how the current program was formulated.

Sandy worked for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service for 34 years in various capacities with endangered species and national wildlife refuges. He is now retired in Gresham, Oregon. He is the author of several books, including "Condor Tales" and "Birds of Baja California, Mexico."

**May 8 at 7 pm.** Allen Fish, Director of the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory (GGRO) will present "A Half Million Hawks Later – 20-Plus Years of Raptor-Tracking at the Golden Gate". Founded in 1985, the GGRO has been called the most citizen-driven raptor-monitoring effort in the US, with nearly 300 volunteers annually contributing more than 40,000 hours. Centered on the autumn flight of tens of thousands of birds of prey of 19 species over the Marin Headlands, the GGRO

runs three ongoing studies – hawkwatching, banding, and radiotracking – and numerous short-term studies.

Come see and hear a two-decade snapshot of the GGRO, including its successes and mistakes. Learn exactly how hard it is to identify *Accipiters*, and other hard-won raptor trivia.

**June 12.** It's a POTLUCK! Our meeting this month is our annual summer potluck, beginning at 6:30 p.m. Bring a dish (entree, hors d'oeuvres, or dessert) and join us!

## 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

April 14	Mitchell Canyon – Mt. Diablo
May 12	Bodega Bay
June 9, 10	Mono Lake

**Unless otherwise indicated, the following applies to all field trips:**

*Coordinator: David Takeuchi, (707) 643-5544*

*Standard Carpool Location: in Vallejo, 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 & bug repellent. 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, excluding the driver).*

Summaries of our recent field trips are posted on the NSAS web site: [www.napasolanoaudubon.com](http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com)

### **Field Trip to Mitchell Canyon, Mt. Diablo Saturday Apr 14, 2007**

**Leader:** Hugh Harvey, MDAS Field Trip Chairman  
**Destination Location and Time:** Meet at 8:30 AM at the Mitchell Canyon parking lot (parking fee). "Go south on 680 to Walnut Creek (Exit 47), then **south** 0.7 mi on N. Main to Ygnacio Valley Rd; turn left (east) 7.7 mi on Ygnacio Valley Rd, right on Clayton Rd 1 mile then turn right on Mitchell Canyon Rd 1.6 miles to road's end."\* "On the north side of Mt. Diablo, this easy trail along the creek is a canyon with riparian woodland, chaparral, oak woodland and pines. Some hill sides above have grasslands or oak savannah." \* This is one of the gems in Contra Costa Co. Birds likely to be seen: woodpeckers, flycatchers, wrens, sparrows, raptors, etc. This is the time of year that wild flowers will be in bloom, and we will look for wind poppies. Carpools leave the standard carpool location at 7:15 am.

### **Field trip to Bodega Bay - May 12, 2007**

**Leader:** Fred Hanson, M.D.  
**Destination Location and Time:** 8:30 AM at the Tides Wharf, 835 HWY 1, Bodega Bay. From Vallejo, take HWY 39 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. The trip ends around 2:00 PM. "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." \* Although this is

the end of the migration, this is a great area for shore/water birds, and land birds.

We may be visiting Doran Park (entrance fee), and our leader tells me the Crab Pot at Spuds Point has won the clam chowder contest two years in a row. If we are unable to work in the Crab Pot for lunch, some of us will be going there after the field trip.

### **Field Trip: Mono Lake, Bodie State Historical Park Saturday and Sunday June 9 and 10, 2007**

**Leader:** David Takeuchi, (707) 643-5544

**Destination Location and Time:** Meet at 8:00 AM at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center, corner of Hwy 395 and 3rd Street in Lee Vining (on HWY 395) which can be reached via CA120 through Tioga Pass (fee), Yosemite National Park. Seniors, bring your Golden Age Pass. On Sunday we will bird at Bodie.

Visit [www.monolake.org](http://www.monolake.org) for motels in Lee Vining Motels, and information about Mono Lake and birding (Eastern Sierra Birding Trail Map). The website also has road condition information. We will be birding the County Park, Lee Vining Canyon, South Tufa area (fee), and Sagehen Summit on Saturday. Target birds: Sage Thrashers, Sage and Brewer's Sparrow, Pinion Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Mountain Chickadee and Lewis's Woodpecker. On Sunday we will meet at 7:00 AM and drive 32 miles north so that we will be at Bodie State Historical Park (fee), a ghost town, when it opens at 8:00 AM. Our target birds here are the Sage Grouse and Mountain Bluebird.

**CARPOOL:** This trip is open to members of NAPA SOLANO AUDUBON SOCIETY. Send an email to: [davidtakeuchi@aol.com](mailto:davidtakeuchi@aol.com), subject "Mono Lake trip", to reserve a slot.

\*Courtesy of excerpts taken from *Birding Northern California*, by Jean Richmond.

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### **Spencer Creek Journal**

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

by Ann Smith, Napa-Solano Audubon Society

**NOVEMBER.** Several interesting birds have been by, including a brief appearance by a Red-breasted Sapsucker, a slate-colored Junco (all gray), and a subspecies of Fox Sparrow with a chunky bill, gray

back, rusty tail, and white belly. Birds seen daily include a pair of brilliantly colored Townsend's Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Bewick's Wren, and a large flock of Golden-crowned Sparrows. Eight Western Bluebirds sailed out to catch insects for about 20 minutes from their perch on an overhead wire and then moved on. A tan-striped White-throated Sparrow, a misplaced eastern bird, ran in and out of the ivy to feed on birdseed, and a Brown Creeper searched tree bark for insects. Wild Turkeys are thinning out, heading back up into the foothills. The local population of tiny tree frogs croaks loudly, totally out of proportion to their size. A Sharp-shinned Hawk has set up its territory to include our yard, making the ground-feeding birds very nervous. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet hunts spider webs under the eaves every day, and its look-a-like cousin, the Hutton's Vireo, comes in daily for water. Both Varied and Hermit Thrushes are decimating pyracantha and toyon berries. Polypody, the earliest of the dormant ferns, is just beginning to leaf out.

*(Spencer Creek Journal is continued on outside page of newsletter)*

### **Results of the 2006 Benicia Christmas Bird Count**

Here are the 2006 Benicia CBC results. The weather was clear in most of the count circle and very cold, with temperatures for the day from 25-58 °F, with very little wind. Over 75 birders and more than two bird-feeder watchers counted 113,999 birds, 168 species, plus two count week species – Red-Breasted Merganser and Semipalmated Plover. There were no new species for the count or really unusual species, although there were 3 Cattle Egrets. Snow Geese were seen for the first time since 2002. The following species tied or broke the previous high counts for the Benicia CBC: Eared Grebe 47, Pelagic Cormorant 5, Blue-winged Teal 12, Sharp-shinned Hawk 14, Cooper's Hawk 23, Red-shouldered Hawk 33, Swainson's Hawk 1, California Quail 217, Long-billed Curlew 542, Northern Pygmy-owl 2, Burrowing Owl 16, Short-eared Owl 33, Anna's Hummingbird 320, Oak Titmouse 68, Rock Wren 22, Ruby-crowned Kinglet 394, American Robin 9320, Varied Thrush 151, Wrentit 9, Cedar Waxwing 672, Hutton's Vireo 25, Common Yellowthroat 188, Song Sparrow 883 (which includes 447 individuals of the race *M.m. maxillaris* 447 – both are Benicia CBC highs), Lincoln's Sparrow 78, Dark-eyed Junco 1270, and Great-tailed Grackle 2.

### **Solano County Breeding Bird Atlas Wrapup for 2006**

The 2006 Solano County Breeding Bird Atlas Season has come to a close. To date, we have 1760 reviewed sightings in 54 blocks submitted by just 33 atlasers. Of concern is that less than half of our atlasers have inputted or turned in their data. YOUR ASSISTANCE IS GREATLY NEEDED! If you can help in this effort, please let Robin (robin\_leong@netzero.net) or Murray (vireo@hotmail.com) know.

Here are some of the highlights for the 2006 breeding season. It was exciting for Wally NeVille and Robin Leong to find 5 broods of Redheads on Mare Island on a pond south of Dump Road. This could be a SF Bay first. Eric Pilotte followed up from Jack Edward's report of Least Terns by the tidal gates on Montezuma Slough and found nesting colonies of Snowy Plovers and Least Terns. These Federally rare and endangered species were first known breeders for Solano County. A new probable breeding species for Solano County were Eurasian Collared-Dove (pairs seen). We suspected that Grasshopper Sparrow was breeding in the past. Ed Pandolfino and Roger Muskat got this species as probable by hearing them singing more than two weeks apart in the same location in two different blocks.

It is great to report that the Prairie Falcons bred again this year. They used a different aerie in the same canyon. Number of Swainson's Hawk's nesting in the Eastern part of Solano continue to amaze. Unfortunately the Cassin's Kingbirds that Bob Lewis found in 2005 did not nest again at Crest Ranch Park in Vallejo.

### **Community Nest Box Project**

The Community Nest Box Project is underway and volunteers are needed to assist in various phases of the project. If you have access to wood shop tools or are otherwise handy at carpentry, your skills are needed to cut plywood. We also need volunteers to lead (or assist) box construction workshops with our community partners for a few hours on weekends in April - June. Or, help locate sites where the boxes can be placed by contacting public and private landowners. There are a variety of volunteer opportunities available and you don't need to be a NSAS member to participate in this valuable project. If you would like more information or want to volunteer contact Karen Sheldon, Project Coordinator, at [KLSheldon@yahoo.com](mailto:KLSheldon@yahoo.com).

# **FRIENDS OF NAPA-SOLANO AUDUBON SOCIETY**

**MEMBERSHIP ONLY \$25 per year**

**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 including the new Solano County Breeding Bird Atlas. Friends of the Napa Solano Audubon Society members receive all issues of the local newsletter Song Sparrow, but do not receive Audubon Magazine.**

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**EMAIL** \_\_\_\_\_  
(receive timely reminders or notification of special events or activities)

**ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_

**CITY** \_\_\_\_\_ **STATE** \_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE(S) (\_\_\_\_)** \_\_\_\_\_

- Please contact me about volunteer opportunities
- I prefer to receive my newsletter by e-mail
- I am enclosing an additional \_\_\_\_\_ donation

**Please make your check for Friends of the Napa Solano Audubon Society Membership - \$25.00 payable to:**

**Napa Solano-Audubon Society (NSAS)**

**Mail to: NSAS, P.O. Box 10006, Napa, CA 94581**

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**To receive Audubon magazine renew your National membership online at [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org). Please designate Chapter 28 in your renewal so we may receive the dues share from National.**

## **Suisun Marsh Natural History Announcements**

The Suisun Wildlife Center may be reached at: 707-429-4295. Information about their events follow:

**Spring Marsh Walk**. The Suisun Marsh Natural History Association has scheduled a 1-1/2 hour guided walk through the reserve on Saturday, May 12. The walk will begin at 9:30 a.m. and will highlight the current and past uses of plants growing there as well as the natural history of resident birds and animals. Binoculars and walking shoes are recommended. The walk is free to members of the Suisun Marsh Natural History Association. Non-members may participate for a \$5.00 fee.

**Wildlife Baby Shower**. Fun for the whole family: Come celebrate and help care for the spring baby animals on Saturday, June 2nd, from 11:00 am - 4:00 pm at the Suisun Wildlife Center, 1171 Kellogg St. - Suisun. Enjoy cake and refreshments, and visits from our education animals. Learn how we care for our local wildlife. See the baby bird nursery, native plant garden, and Sool the Golden Eagle's enclosure.

You can help support a baby duck, jackrabbit, raccoon, squirrel, owl or songbird by sponsoring their care for just one month. Learn about baby raccoons, jackrabbits, possums and birds. Find out if you have what it takes to be a volunteer and work with wildlife!

**Native American Historical Walk**. The Association has scheduled a 2 hour field trip in Rockville Hills Park on April 14, starting at 9:30 am.

The interpretive tour will focus on the customs, lifestyles and religious ceremonies of the local Suisun Indians. Binoculars and walking shoes are recommended. This walk may be difficult for small children, as there is some uphill walking. The walk is free to members of the Suisun Marsh Natural History Association. Non-members may participate for a \$5.00 fee.

**Owls – Up Close!** The Association offers an exciting two night class! Learn the fascinating facts about owls (the silent hunters of the night). The first night will include an audio-visual presentation, viewing of native California species, and hands-on study. The second class will be a field trip to view local native species with Napa-Solano Audubon Society board member and noted field trip leader Robin Leong. Join us on May 18th and

19th for this event! Class night Friday, May 18 will be from 7:30-9:00 pm at the Wildlife Center in Suisun. Those participating will be given instructions for Sunday, when the field trip will run from afternoon to evening. The course fee is \$15.00 per person or \$25.00 for two from the same household – children FREE with participating adult. The fee includes a one-year membership in the Suisun Marsh Natural History Association. Those interested in participating should call the Wildlife Center at (707) 429-4295, between 9 and 6 to register - no walk-ins will be accepted. Registration is limited to 30 - call today!

### **Meet Hermann Heinzl, Author of *Birds of Napa County***

#### **Wednesday, April 25th at 7:00pm**

Join Hermann Heinzl, author and illustrator of *Birds of Napa County*, for a lecture and book signing at the Richardson Bay Audubon Center and Sanctuary. Hermann Heinzl, who is visiting from the south of France, has been involved with illustrating birds for many years including working for television, magazines, and book publishers. He illustrated the highly successful *Birds of Britain and Europe*. In his new book, *Birds of Napa County* (Heyday Books), Hermann takes a birds-eye view of the wine country and utilizes his playfulness, sophistication, and emotion to add depth to our rich understanding of Napa and the natural creatures that are found there.

The Richardson Bay Audubon Center is located at 376 Greenwood Beach Rd., Tiburon, CA 94920  
[www.tiburonaudubon.org](http://www.tiburonaudubon.org)  
Free and open to the public; for more information call (415) 388-2524.

Hermann Heinzl will also appear at Carolyn Parr Nature Center at 4:00 pm on April 15, 2007; and at the Napa Valley Earth Day Celebration at Kennedy Park on April 21, 2007. All events are free and books will be available for sale.

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

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



### **Continuation of Spencer Creek Journal**

A Ruby-crowned Kinglet hunts spider webs under the eaves every day, and its look-a-like cousin, the Hutton's Vireo, comes in daily for water. Both Varied and Hermit Thrushes are decimating pyracantha and toyon berries. Polypody, the earliest of the dormant ferns, is just beginning to leaf out.

DECEMBER 2006. Several rodent species are attracted by bird seed. The most interesting to me are the pocket mouse, vole, and gray squirrel, but the food source is so regular that they all over-populate over time and require some control to keep their numbers down. A resident pair of Red-shouldered Hawks helps, too. The Varied Thrush is here in much larger numbers than usual, even coming into the yard for cracked corn. Many smaller birds, such as warblers, titmice, and chickadees, occasionally use the hummingbird feeders, upsetting the Anna's Hummingbirds. A Pileated Woodpecker sends out its loud, rattling call daily, probably answered but beyond my hearing level. A Cooper's Hawk settled for a time in the blue oaks, producing a very quiet yard. Two Northern Flickers pounded on the side of the house but didn't stay. A walk up the muddy hillside trail produced no flowers, but all the native ferns are leafing out—maidenhair, sword, oak, polypody, and chain ferns.

JANUARY 2007. A mockingbird, unusual in this habitat, came into the oaks briefly. A hard freeze mid-month froze the bird bath, so the regulars ice-skated around but found no water. After the ice was broken off, at least half the 50 or so birds in the yard visited it immediately, drinking and bathing. Even the White-throated Sparrow, still here, joined the crowd. Sometimes black-tailed deer coming through at night drink the bird bath dry, but they can't when it's frozen, so one doe and her fawn with a split ear showed up, too. It's amazing that they all depend on the bird bath so heavily, although Spencer Creek is not more than 50 feet away. Two days in a row, a Red-shouldered Hawk picked off a fallen bird which hit a window, the hawk looking huge as it skirted by the glass with a Junco in its talons. Near the end of the month, Oak Titmice began to sing and striped skunks showed up as their breeding season nears. The milkmaids are showing a few white blossoms, the first of the wildflowers to bloom. Spring fever is setting in. Spring is the very finest time of year for those who enjoy Napa's natural surroundings, and it will be here in just a minute.