



# Song Sparrow

Quarterly Newsletter of the Napa-Solano Audubon Society  
Volume 38 No. 2 Winter 2007

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

## Together We Can Make a Difference!

Hello again and Seasons Greetings! In October, I attended the Audubon Assembly at Asilomar. It was a wonderful experience to meet and share ideas with some of the more than 300 California chapter representatives. Excellent workshops and programs were offered on various topics. However the central theme was Global Warming and Wildlife AND what we can do about it. Although it is easy to feel overwhelmed, we were heartened by all of the positive ideas about what we can do. And, yes, if we all pitch in – we CAN make a difference.

I am sure that most of you have already changed your light bulbs, are driving less and recycling more! But as birders, we have the opportunity to also participate in meaningful "Citizen Science" activities that will help our bird populations NOW. Studies show that aside from rare & threatened species, we have many common birds in decline – including Horned Larks, Golden Crown Kinglets, Evening Grosbeaks, and Violet Green Swallows. The scientific community needs help to better understand bird populations, breeding success & which habitats most need protection. We can all help gather the information needed by participating in our local Christmas bird counts, our Breeding Bird Atlas, the Project Feeder Watch program & other monitoring programs.

Please give a few hours to one or more of these projects and consider helping at the Flyway Festival or Earth Day events, school & youth activities, or by being an "armchair activist!" See our website for local projects and for a description of other citizen science activities, see Audubon California's website [www.audubon.ca.org](http://www.audubon.ca.org). THANK YOU!

--Cheryl Harris, President

## Benicia Christmas Bird Count Monday, Dec. 17, 2007

***A fun & worthwhile project for everyone!  
All members are invited to participate – no matter what your level of skill***

Please help with this important NSAS activity. We need a lot of volunteers to make this a success. Our primary task is to count all the birds seen or heard within a 15-mile diameter circle whose center is 1.5 mile north of Pierce Lane on Hwy 680. This area is divided (& sometimes subdivided) into 14+ areas with team captains. Expert birders are coveted, however we need birders at any level. For those who are less skilled, we need help in recording birds seen, locale, time and mileage. The Benicia CBC is a 24 hour event, rain or shine. Many of us start at sun up (some owl earlier) and quit when the areas' habitats are all sampled. If you can only do a few hours, that is ok too.

For those who work that day but love to cook, please share that skill – contact Liz Knight (707) 448-6596. She is organizing the dinner & will be at the Florence Douglas Senior Center in Vallejo at 333 Amador Street at 4 PM. Depending on the weather, our counters will begin to show up about 4:30pm to start tallying their sightings. Since it is often cold & damp in December, hot dishes are most welcome, especially soups, hearty stews, and casseroles. Ovens, stovetops & electrical outlets are available near the serving area.

Please help us maintain our record of seeing over 150 species. Thanks in advance for helping out!

Contact: Robin Leong (707) 643-1287

## NSAS Selected Board Members

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

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

## **Angwin Christmas Bird Count: A great way to start the New Year!**

Unable to participate in the Benicia Count on December 17 ? Perhaps you can join the Angwin count on Tues. January 1, 2008. Contact: Floyd E. Hayes, Professor of Biology, Department of Biology, Pacific Union College; Tel: 707-965-6401; Fax: 707-965-7577

Website: [www.geocities.com/floyd\\_hayes](http://www.geocities.com/floyd_hayes)

## **General Meetings and Programs**

General Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at The Florence Douglas Senior Center, 333 Amador St., Vallejo (see map on our website). Meetings begin at 7 pm with about 15 minutes of social time, sharing of birding experiences and refreshments; this is 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 December, January & February 2008.

Note: the Senior Center is suffering from funding cuts & has now opened a small gift shop featuring both new & used items. We encourage everyone to bring a donation of new or "gently used" items for their shop. There will be a box for these donations at each of our meetings.

## **Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2007 6:30 pm Holiday Pot Luck Dinner, Craft Bazaar & Photo Presentations**

You are invited to share recent photos of birds or birding trip(s). Bring up to 12 slides or a disc slide show to show after dinner. Bring a potluck dish to share. Heating elements in the kitchen will be available & table service provided; AND if you are into woodcarving, knitting, crochet or other handwork, pottery, crafts, painting, photography – bring along a selection plus display materials to show & sell (if you wish) your work. A small donation from your sales given back to NSAS or to the Senior Center would be appreciated. Audubon books & calendars will also be available for sale at a discount to NSAS Friends members.

## **Tuesday, Jan. 8, 2008 7:00 pm Audubon's Bobcat Ranch: Birds, Bees and Working Lands**

Vance Russell and Rodd Kelsey from Audubon California's Landowner Stewardship Program (LSP) will give a slide presentation on the recently acquired Audubon Bobcat Ranch near Winters. The presentation will feature an overview of the Landowner Stewardship Program. Come learn how the LSP program helps conserve and restore wildlife habitat on farms and ranches in a manner compatible with existing agricultural

operations. More information on LSP can be found on the Audubon California web site (<http://ca.audubon.org/lsp>). Audubon members are encouraged to contact Vance to arrange future fieldtrips during the year.

## **Tuesday, Feb. 12, 2008 7:00 pm Update on California Birds**

Dr Gary Langham, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon California, will give an update about the status of our California bird populations and describe the new Flex GIS toolkit that is being developed to help local chapters identify birds of concern as well as priority habitats to monitor & protect in our local area.

## **NSAS Provides Audubon Adventures to Schools**

Thanks to the following members whose donations paid for extra Audubon Adventure Kits: Robin Leong, Marge & Bruce Irwin, Susan Lane, Pat Hildreth, and Joan Castro. This year the participating schools are: El Centro, Phillips-Edison, Bel Aire, Vichy, Snow, and Napa Junction. If you would like to help support this program in schools near you, send your donation (\$45/kit) to: NSAS, P.O. Box 10006, Napa 94581.

## **Great Backyard Bird Count is a Great Opportunity to Connect with Nature**

*In February, volunteers throughout the  
U.S. and Canada are invited to  
"Count for Fun, Count for the Future!"*

Millions of novice and accomplished bird watchers can make their fascination with nature add up for science and for the future during the 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, led by Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. During "Presidents' Day" weekend, February 15-18, 2008, anyone can count birds from wherever they are and enter their tallies online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). These reports create an exciting real-time picture of where the birds are across the continent and contribute valuable information for science and conservation.

## **Diseases at the Bird Feeder a note from National Audubon**

Several diseases are contagious between birds. If a diseased bird (those with malformed bills, bulbous growths on feet or face, or swollen, reddish, or watery eyes) are frequently visiting your feeders, take down the feeder, discard the seed & clean the feeder with a bleach solution (9 parts water to one  
*See Diseases at the Feeder, next page*

*Diseases at the Feeder, continued*

part bleach). Wait a week or more before reactivating the feeder station. This will cause the temporary dispersion of feeder birds & discourage revisiting by diseased birds. The same precautions should be taken if several dead birds with no sign of predator injury are found near the feeder.

## Field Trips

Details for the December, January & February field trips are provided below. Unless otherwise indicated, the following applies to every field trip:

**COORDINATOR:** David Takeuchi (707) 643-5544

David Takeuchi is the Coordinator for all Field Trips. If calling and want a return call, leave the city of your return phone number. Email David at davidtakeuchi@aol.com (enter: "Subject: Field Trip").

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! Heavy rain cancels. Non-members are always welcome.

### CARPOOL LOCATIONS:

Cordelia/Suisun: Solano County Office of Education parking lot (5100 Business Center Drive, Fairfield) near Costco.

Vallejo: Old Wal-Mart parking lot across from Baskin-Robbins (5182 Sonoma Blvd.). From Sonoma Blvd., turn east at the Meadows Drive traffic light.

## Saturday, Dec. 15, 2007 Field trip to Fairfield & Suisun

**CARPOOL LOCATION AND TIME:** from Vallejo: 7:30 AM and from Cordelia/Suisun: 8:00 AM.

**LEADER:** David Takeuchi

**TRIP DESCRIPTION:** We will be birding Fairfield, Suisun for migrant land birds and waterfowl. We hope to gain access to a private preserve in the Suisun marsh. We anticipate birding until 2:00 pm. Pack snacks and a lunch. Dress appropriately, and bring insect repellent.

## Saturday, Jan. 12, 2008 Field Trip to Palo Alto Baylands Nature Preserve

**DESTINATION LOCATION AND TIME:** 10:00 AM at the Lucy Evans Baylands Nature Interpretive Center parking lot. The address is 2775 Embarcadero Road, Palo Alto, CA 94393.

Take US-101 South towards San Jose. From the junction of US-101 and Embarcadero Road in Palo Alto, go east on Embarcadero Road about 1 mile, past the duck pond for another 0.3 miles to the Lucy Evans Baylands Nature Interpretive Center. Driving distance from Vallejo carpool location, about 66 miles.

**CARPOOL LOCATIONS AND TIME:** From Vallejo: 8:30 AM and from Cordelia/Suisun: 8:30 AM

**LEADERS:** Keith Gish and Sue Johnson

**TRIP DESCRIPTION:** 15 miles of well-traveled Bayside trails that track along one of the most beautiful wetlands in the Bay Area. Managed by the City of Palo Alto, the Baylands Preserve encompasses 1,940 acres of undisturbed fresh and saltwater marshland, offering a prime bird-watching and nature photography area with resident birds and visiting Pacific flyway migrants. This will be our opportunity to look for rails. To take advantage of the high tide, we will be birding until 3:00 pm.

## Saturday, Feb. 16, 2008 Field Trip to Cosumnes River Preserve

**DESTINATION LOCATION AND TIME:** 9:30 AM, Cosumnes River Preserve Visitor Center, 13501 Franklin Blvd. Galt, CA 95632. (916) 684-2816 [info@cosumnes.org](mailto:info@cosumnes.org)

Cosumnes River Preserve is located between Sacramento and Stockton. Take CA-12 east through Rio Vista to I-5 north. Take I-5 north to the Thornton-Walnut Grove Road exit. Go east toward the Chevron station and turn left immediately after the Chevron station onto Thornton Rd. Follow Thornton Rd. north for about 2 miles and it will turn into Franklin Blvd. Continue north on Franklin crossing over the Thornton-Franklin bridge. The Visitor Center and parking are on your right, just after the bridge.

### CARPOOL LOCATION AND TIME:

from Cordelia/Suisun location at 8:00 AM.

**LEADER:** David Takeuchi

**TRIP DESCRIPTION:** The Central Valley once contained one of the largest expanses of streamside forest and wetland habitat in North America. Along with cottonwoods, willows, ash, and other flood-resistant trees, great forests of valley oaks (*Quercus lobata*) studded its fertile floodplains. But the rich river bottom soil was coveted by farmers who cleared most of the land. Today, only tiny remnants of these magnificent oak groves are to be found in the Central Valley. Along the lower Cosumnes, small but significant stands of valley oaks have survived. These groves cover some 1,500 acres, and along with the remaining riverside forests and wetlands, they provide habitat for the wildlife that still flourishes here. *See Cosumnes River Preserve Field Trip, next page*

### *Cosumnes River Preserve Field Trip, continued*

The Cosumnes floodplain is a haven for tens of thousands of migratory waterfowl, songbirds, and raptors, for a large portion of the Central Valley's population of greater Sandhill cranes, and for rare reptiles and mammals like the endangered giant garter snake and the elusive river otter. I anticipate us seeing a majority of the waterfowl and Sandhill Cranes on this trip. For a list of birds, mammals, reptiles and fauna, go to their website. We will conclude this trip by about 2 pm.

### **Additional Upcoming Field Trips**

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

- 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 in the Redwood Grove

### **Spencer Creek Journal**

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

*By Ann Smith, Napa-Solano Audubon Society*

**AUG.-SEPT. 2007.** There are lots of California Quail this year, with one adult covey of 11 birds. A smaller covey which started with seven chicks is down to five. In spring, immature Wild Turkeys were very popular with predators, which are now reducing the quail population. In late August, a surprising number of juvenile birds were still being fed by their parents, including Dark-Eyed Juncos, Steller's Jays, Spotted and California Towhees, and Nuttall's Woodpeckers. One Scrub Jay has a bill with the upper and lower segments growing out crossed, but it can still drink and eat successfully.

Anna's Hummingbirds have been here in large numbers, with a few Allen's. Duane had to nudge a determined Anna's off with his finger before he could remove the quart feeder to refill it. Hooded and Bullock's Orioles disappeared by the end of August, as did almost all of the Black-headed Grosbeaks.

By September 10, only one Black-headed Grosbeak juvenile remained. A Black-throated Gray Warbler migrated through. On the 22nd, the first small flock of Golden-crowned Sparrows arrived, and a Townsend's Warbler came to the peanut butter feeder. Almost every year, one or two Townsend's winter here, much to my delight. Their yellow, black, and white colors are spectacular. The first Audubon's warbler showed up on September 25. The hillside is dry and

brown except for California fuchsia, which somehow manages to find water for its red blooms.

**OCTOBER.** The very late Black-headed Grosbeak finally left by October 6, the rest of his species already gone for a month. A Fox Sparrow arrived. Mid-month, a covey of quail were frightened at dusk and one struck the window with a big bang. I found it standing on a step, unable to move, but an hour later it had disappeared. The next day one lone California Quail walked unsteadily into the yard to pick off black oil sunflower seeds.

Ravens were overhead in light rain on Oct. 16. Western Screech-Owls sometimes warbled and sometimes hooted, but they weren't seen, being almost completely nocturnal. Pileated Woodpeckers called daily, their loud rattle heard over long distances. One shy White-throated Sparrow, tan-striped, arrived Oct. 25. It stayed mostly on the ground and close to vegetation, almost like a Fox Sparrow. The first of the fall American Goldfinch came in for thistle seed, and a Hermit Thrush found pyracantha berries to pluck.

Spencer Creek has barely risen at all with the rain because the thirsty hillsides are hoarding all the water. There are unusually large crops of buckeyes and acorns, so the deer and squirrels should fare well this winter. --Ann Smith

### **Tubbs Island Field Trip Report**

On September 15, 2007, sixteen birders joined me for a sunny morning in the marsh. We had high expectation of seeing thousands of shorebirds and waterfowl, but since the winter migration was just beginning, we would need to wait another month for the expected flocks of migrants.

However, we managed to see 41 species and some of us did our part on this Bay Clean Up Day, removing trash – styrofoam, & plastics (see photo, page 6). It is no longer possible to drive around the entire levee, as a portion has washed out. Fortunately, Christy Smith, Refuge Manager, met us, unlocked the gate, allowing us to drive in 5 miles then walk the remaining 2 miles around the ponds.

**Bird List:** American White Pelican, Double-Crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron, Turkey Vulture, Canada Goose, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Gadwall, Black-shouldered Kite, Northern Harrier, Red-shouldered Hawk, American Kestrel, Swainson's Hawk, Black Rail (heard by M.B.), Killdeer, Black-bellied Plover, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Greater Yellowlegs, Willet (many immature), Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Western Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Ring-billed Gull, Western Gull, Vaux Swift (I.D. by M.B.), Say's Phoebe, Tree Swallow, Violet-green Swallow, Barn Swallow, Marsh Wren, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird.

*See Tubbs Island Report, next page*

*Tubbs Island Report, continued*

Mike Moshier attended the trip and took a fantastic photo of a Northern Harrier. Thank you Mike!

--David Takeuchi, Leader, Lower Tubbs Island trip



Northern Harrier. Photo by Mike Moshier of Fairfield

Boston Clam Chowder. On the way back, we stopped so I could get pictures of stunning *Protea neriifolia*, Mink Pink, and other exotic plants in front of a bed and breakfast.

A total of 61 species were seen: Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Eared Grebe, Western Grebe, Clark's Grebe, American White Pelican, Brown Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Canada Goose, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Pelagic Cormorant, Brandt Cormorant, Surf Scoter, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Wild Turkey (3), California Quail, Pigeon Guillemot, Marbled Godwit, American Coot, Northern Oystercatcher, Black-bellied Plover, Killdeer, Black Turnstone, Willet, Long-billed Curlew, Western Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Sanderling, Ring-billed Gull, Western Gull, Glaucous-winged Gull, Rock dove, Anna's Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker, Black Phoebe, California Scrub Jay, American Crow, Marsh Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, European Starling, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Common Yellow-throat, Spotted Towhee, Savannah Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Brewer's Blackbird, Lesser Goldfinch.

--David Takeuchi

### Bodega Bay Field Trip Report

On October 13, 2007, ten enthusiastic birders joined our guest leader Dr. Fred Hanson for a sunny day of birding along the sea coast. We started at Bodega Head, and were thankful for the calm breeze. We ran into Rich Stallcup with his group of birders and were informed that there were many Pigeon Guillemots off shore. We initially misidentified them as Common Murres, but then decided they were, indeed, the immature Guillemots. Three turkeys were a new sighting for the head. We moved on down to Hole-in-the-wall & later Owl

Canyon to see warblers and Golden-crowned Kinglets. We enjoyed lunch at the Crab Pot, noted for their award-winning

### San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival February 1-3, 2008

Mark your calendar for this premier North Bay birding event. Plan to bring your family and friends and volunteer a couple of hours if you can. Please notify Cheryl if you are able to help at stations in the field, at the membership table, or with children's activities. Check the NSAS web site or the Flyway Festival web site for more information.

[www.sfbayflywayfestival.com](http://www.sfbayflywayfestival.com) [www.napasolanoaudubon.com](http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com)

--Cheryl Harris [cheryleharris@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cheryleharris@sbcglobal.net) (707)224-6133

## 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.

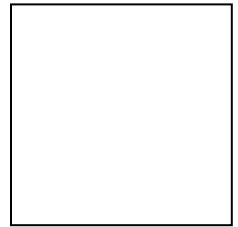
I am enclosing an additional \_\_\_\_\_ donation to support citizen science and educational projects.

Make your check payable to "Friends of NSAS" & mail to: Napa-Solano Audubon Soc P.O. Box 10006, Napa, CA 94581

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



**PRSRT STD**



Return Service Requested

### **Tubbs Island Trash Collectors**



*Participants on the September 15, 2007 field trip to Tubbs Island posed with the trash they carried out of the marsh.*

### **Event Calendar At-a-Glance**

- Tue. Dec. 11** General Meeting, Vallejo (Holiday Potluck)
  - Sat. Dec. 15** Field Trip to Fairfield & Suisun
  - Mon. Dec. 17** Benicia Christmas Bird Count
  - Tue. Jan. 1** Angwin Christmas Bird Count
  - Tue. Jan. 8** General Meeting in Vallejo
  - Sat. Jan. 12** Field Trip Palo Alto Baylands
  - Feb. 1-3** San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival
  - Tue. Feb. 12** General Meeting in Vallejo
  - Sat. Feb. 16** Field Trip to Cosumnes River Preserve
  - Tue. Mar. 11** General Meeting in Vallejo
  - Sat. Mar. 15** Field Trip to Livermore Ranch, Napa
- Plus weekly Friday Bird Walks in & around Napa**  
Please check the website if you can for any last-minute updates regarding our events. [www.napasolanoaudubon.com](http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com)