



# Song Sparrow

Quarterly Newsletter of the Napa-Solano Audubon Society  
Volume 39 No. 1 Fall 2008

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

## Greetings

Fall here already? Impossible! On the other hand, after enduring the never-ending politics on TV for an eternity, I thought it would never get here. Ready or not, fall is on the way, and that means Napa-Solano Audubon activities are coming, beginning with our monthly meeting on September 9.

I had a great time in the Sierras back in June, when I attended a week-long "Birding by Ear" class at the Sierra Nevada Field Campus (SNFC) near Yuba Pass. What a fun place! It was kind of like a week-long birding summer camp. When I was not visiting with all the other friendly people from around the state, I split my time between practicing the recognition of bird voices and stalking them with my camera! I'm thinking about going back next summer, maybe for the bird song recording class! You can learn more about SNFC on the web site here: <http://www.sfsu.edu/~sierra/>

Our president, Cheryl Harris, spent her summer on a long trip to Alaska. It will be fun to hear about her adventures, perhaps in our next newsletter? Until then, hope to see you at one of our fall events! --Dave McMullen



Yellow Warbler

--- photo by Dave McMullen

## BOOK REVIEW

### "A World of Watchers"

*a history of the American passion for birds*  
by Joseph Kastner

The word "passion" was what originally attracted me to Joseph Kastner's book about American bird watchers. I feel passionate about birds, especially when I'm out in the field with them. I've felt my fellow bird watchers' passion for birds on field trips and in birding discussions. Joseph Kastner's book acknowledges Native Americans as our first, and most attuned, bird watchers. He then gives the stories of so many people whose names are so familiar to today's bird watchers. Through the stories of these passionate people, we see how today we are the continuation of a natural love for birds: Baird, Brewster, Nuttall, Coues, Cooper, Grinnell, and Wilson, to list a few.

I appreciated learning about passionate women in the early days of birding, especially Margaret Nice and her scientific Song Sparrow study. Kastner talks about poets and presidents and Roger Tory Peterson and their passions for birds. I felt very comfortable and among friends while reading this book.

--Sue Johnson

## Join the NSAS Email List!

If you did not receive this newsletter via email, consider joining our email announcement list. We will not share your email address with anybody, and we promise not to bombard you with announcements (usually only 1 per month). To be added to the email list, send your request to me at my new email address: [red-tail@comcast.net](mailto:red-tail@comcast.net). In the same email message, you can request to stop receiving a paper copy of the Song Sparrow in the mail, which saves paper and money for NSAS.

--Dave McMullen

## Monthly Field Trips

Details for the September, October, & November field trips are provided below. Unless otherwise indicated, the following applies to all field trips:

**COORDINATOR:** David Takeuchi (707) 643-5544. David is the Coordinator for all Field Trips. If calling and want a return call, leave the city of your return phone number. Email him at davidtakeuchi@aol.com (enter: "Subject: Field Trip").

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.

Napa: Riverpark Shopping Center; by Sweeney's Sportshop, 1537 W. Imola Avenue, between Coombs and Jefferson Streets.

Check the details for the specific trip to see which carpool locations will be used for that trip.

Carpoolers 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.

The Carpool times listed are departure times. Please arrive prior to the departure time for carpooling. If you are the only one who shows up at a carpool location, you may need to drive yourself to the next carpool location (closer to the destination).

## Saturday, Sep. 13, 2008 Field trip to Abbott's Lagoon

**DESTINATION LOCATION AND TIME:** 8:45 AM, Abbott's Lagoon Parking Lot.

### CARPOOL LOCATIONS AND TIME:

From Vallejo: 7:15 AM  
From Napa: 7:00 AM

**LEADER:** Dr. Fred Hanson

**TRIP DESCRIPTION:** Abbott's Lagoon is listed among the 10 best birding locations in West Marin County. The biggest allure is the fall passage of shorebirds, including possible rare or uncommon vagrants. From the parking area, we will work our way 1.5 miles down a trail to the lower lagoon and 0.3 miles further to the beach. The terrain is open coastal scrub, with no shade trees. Pack a lunch to eat at the beach. The trip will end around 2:00 PM.

**Directions:** From the town of Point Reyes Station, turn right onto Sir Francis Drake Blvd., pass thru Inverness and take the right fork to Pierce Point Road and go 3.3 miles to the parking lot. This last part of the drive is only 10 miles, but may take 20 minutes or more.

See Monthly Field Trips section above for further information.

## Saturday, Oct. 18, 2008 Field Trip to Chadbourne Road

**DESTINATION LOCATION AND TIME:** 8:30 AM, Fairfield/Suisun Wastewater Treatment Plant, about ½ mi. on the left side of Chadbourne Rd. off Hwy 12.

### CARPOOL LOCATIONS AND TIME:

From Cordelia/Suisun: 8:00 AM  
From Napa: 7:30 AM

**LEADER:** Margaret Barson (707) 257-8389

**TRIP DESCRIPTION:** We will be met by Margaret Kralovec, the Environmental Outreach Specialist who will lead us on a short tour of the grounds. She will explain the important environmental role the plant plays in treating wastewater for release into the Suisun Marsh. There are always birds to be seen here and hopefully migratory ducks will have arrived. This is one of the best sites to study duck identification because of the variety and close range. After our visit we will take a slow ride down Chadbourne Rd. and side roads to look for raptors and passerines. Bring a lunch and/or snacks and water. The trip will end around 1:00 PM.

See Monthly Field Trips section above for further information.

## Saturday, Nov. 1, 2008 Field Trip to Lake Hennessey

**DESTINATION LOCATION AND TIME:** 8:40 AM, at the end of Conn Valley Road at Lake Hennessey.

### CARPOOL LOCATIONS AND TIME:

From Vallejo: 7:30 AM  
From Cordelia/Suisun: 7:30 AM  
From Napa: 8:00 AM

**LEADER:** Murray Berner

### TRIP DESCRIPTION:

The field trip will be in two parts. First, we will walk the north shore service road in search of waterfowl, gulls, raptors and sparrows. This is a roundtrip of 1.4 miles on level gravel road. Second, we will drive back to the Conn Creek bridge and walk the gravel road along the wooded Conn Creek arm of the lake. Close views of waterfowl and great oak woodland birding highlight this part of the day. The trip will end around 1 PM.

For those of you unable to join Murray on his Friday morning bird walks, this is an opportunity to bird with a Napa County *See "Lake Hennessey Field Trip," next page*

*Lake Hennessey Field Trip, continued*

birder of long experience. In addition to leading field trips and teaching bird ID at Napa College, Murray is co-author of NAPA SOLANO AUDUBON SOCIETY's Breeding Birds of Napa County and an editor of Hermann Heinzel's Birds of Napa County. Both books are available for purchase through NAPA SOLANO AUDUBON SOCIETY. Visit our website for information.

A diverse assortment of diving ducks has been found at the lake the past several fall seasons. A Tufted Duck has appeared in late October each of the last three years. Five species of grebe are possible. Bald Eagle, Osprey and Peregrine Falcon are likely. A Merlin is guaranteed. Woodland and grassland birding should reveal all the winter sparrows, late migrant warblers, and lots of woodpeckers.

See Monthly Field Trips section above for further information.

## **Saturday, Nov. 15, 2008 Field Trip to Denverton Slough**

**DESTINATION LOCATION AND TIME:** 8:00 AM, at the Cordelia/Suisun Carpool location (Solano County Office of Education Building, 5100 Business Center Drive, across from COSTCO off of Green Valley Road).

**CARPOOL LOCATIONS AND TIME:**  
From Cordelia/Suisun: 8:00 AM

**LEADER:** Jerry Karr [birdnerd@jps.net](mailto:birdnerd@jps.net) (707) 643-7089

**TRIP DESCRIPTION:** Join us for a Winter visit to the 760 acre Denverton Slough property of the California Conservation Fund. This organization owns numerous properties throughout California that are privately held for the purpose of maintaining both upland and wetland habitats for the betterment of California's wildlife. The property is primarily seasonal wetlands with an additional 174 acres of adjacent uplands that are leased for additional habitat. This property is located approximately ten miles east of Fairfield just off HY 12. This is a special opportunity to see a very good example of innovative private land stewardship. Let's see what winter visitors are utilizing this area so close to an urban setting. Bring lunch and/or snacks, and water. The trip will end around 1 PM.

See Monthly Field Trips section above for further information.

## **Additional Friday Field Trips**

In addition to the field trips above, our weekly Friday Bird Walks will continue through the fall, led by Murray Berner. A carpool meets at the regular Napa location (see above) at 8:00 AM each Friday. Visitors are most welcome. An email usually goes out to a special list of "Friday birders" a couple days prior to the trip describing the destination for the week. Contact Dave McMullen or Cheryl Harris to be added to this email list.

## **Benicia Christmas Bird Count Report Dec. 17, 2007**

**ANTICIPATION:** I thought 2007 was the year to break all records for our Benicia Christmas Bird Count (CBC). We had done so much more planning than in years past. We had a remarkable 107 counters signed up, including many new Napa-Solano Audubon Society members. We were planning to bird in new areas, such as the Minahan Ranch. We worked hard to get permission to enter private lands including the Santa Clara property, the former Concord Weapons Naval Station, and Tesoro's Refinery in Martinez. We made sure to secure a big boat to cover Grizzly Bay after failing last year. And I had prepared carefully with different teams to make sure that certain areas were not double-covered and to make sure we had people to cover these new places.

When the event finally arrived, misfortunes foiled our efforts. The mere prediction of bad weather decreased our turn out and the hours logged by some of those who did participate. Some veteran counters became ill at the last minute. We could not enter the Santa Clara property (900+ acres) because of an issue with the NSAS insurance policy renewal. One team had to cut short birding due to a death in the family, so the former Concord Weapons Naval Station was missed. The Captain of the boat around Grizzly Bay had some problems in the shipping lane, so his route was shortened.

Considering this uncanny conglomeration of bad luck, it is perhaps not surprising that we had lower numbers of many species than in previous years. I was surprised we missed the Mute Swan this year, after they had bred within the count circle recently and we had just counted them 2 days earlier across the Carquinez Strait in the Contra Costa County CBC.

The final total for our count was 166 species and 109,931 birds. Although these numbers sound good and compare well with the past 10 years, I had hoped for better results, both overall and at a detailed level. When I look carefully at other CBC results around the Bay Area with similar habitat, I think we have potential to exceed 170 species, someday... Maybe next year!

On the bright side, we had 94 participants--the second highest ever! The weather held; it could have been much worse. We found two new species, a Clay-colored Sparrow (documented with pictures from Phil Gulley) and Eurasian Collared Doves (21) found by Darrell Lee and Janet Thiessen. Best of all, it was so great to see all my loyal CBC friends, many of whom I sadly never see most of the rest of the year! Thank you so much to each of you and everyone who helped. This was my 21st year compiling our count, and I could never pull it off without your help. Special thanks to NSAS, Valero Refinery and Shell Oil for sponsoring us.   
--Robin Leong



*Green Heron with Eggs. Original Watercolor by Rita Sklar*

Visit the artist's web site at [www.ritasklar.com](http://www.ritasklar.com).

## **“Wild About Birds”**

### ***A watercolor collection by Rita Sklar***

The Benicia Public Library presents “Wild About Birds,” an exhibit of paintings of local, national and international birds by award-winning artist Rita Sklar. The show will open on September 21, 2008 and run through October 26, 2008. The Benicia Public Library is located at 150 East L Street. It is open Monday - Thursday 10 am - 9 pm and Friday - Sunday Noon - 6 pm.

Wild About Birds is an exploration of the wonders of nature when bird migration takes place. The compositions resonate with color and vibrant shadows, reflecting a wide range of expression and spontaneity. The unique style imparts a sense of weight and structure to the paintings, not usually associated with watercolor. Abstraction mixes with realism giving the paintings a feeling of movement and immediacy.

## **General Meetings and Programs**

General Meetings are *usually* 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 and a short period of chapter business (field

trip, conservation, and membership reports, etc.), and finally most meetings feature a special presentation or guest speaker. See below for details on our September 2008 program The October and November Program details will be announced via email and posted on our web site as soon as possible.

## **Tuesday, Sep. 9, 2008 7:00 pm U.S. Forest Service Conservation**

Cheryl Carrothers is the Wildlife Program Leader for the US Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region, whose offices are located at Mare Island in Vallejo. She has held this position for two years, inheriting many of the non-Threatened and Endangered Species bird program responsibilities previously managed by John Robinson, former NSAS member and newsletter Editor. Her background includes approximately 20 years with the Forest Service in Arizona and northern CA.

The Pacific Southwest Region is actively engaged in developing and maintaining partnerships that maintain and enhance wildlife habitats on public lands. The “Partners In Flight” project is one example. Her presentation will provide an overview of the depth and diversity of current efforts, with a special emphasis on migratory birds. Key points will include monitoring and data collection cooperatives and opportunities for involvement by local membership.

**Save the Date  
Friends of NSAS Social**

*Come join your fellow birders at our  
Annual Friends of the Napa-Solano  
Audubon Society Get-Together*

*Friday, October 10, 2008  
4:30 - 7:00 PM*

*In a beautiful private garden setting  
Details to be sent to registered Friends of NSAS.*

*Wine, Hors d'oeuvres, Silent Auction\**

Remember, this event is for Friends members only.  
If you have not yet sent in your membership renewal, please  
do so now (membership form below).

\* Please be thinking about something you might like to  
donate to the Silent Auction!



*Calliipe Hummingbird*

*--- photo by Dave McMullen*

**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 TODAY** 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.

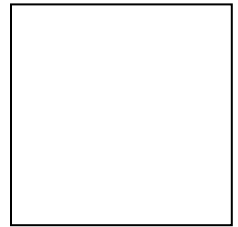
Make your check payable to "Friends of NSAS"

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

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**P.O. Box 10006**  
**Napa, CA 94581**



**PRSRST STD**



Return Service Requested



*Hammond's Flycatcher at Yuba Pass, CA.*  
*Photo by Dave McMullen.*

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

- Tue. Sep. 9**      General Meeting, Program: US Forest Service Bird Conservation
- Sat. Sep. 13**    Field Trip to Abbott's Lagoon, Point Reyes
- Tue. Oct. 14**    General Meeting, Program: TBA
- Sat Oct. 18**     Field trip to Chadbourne Road, Cordelia
- Sat. Nov. 1**     Field Trip to Lake Hennessey
- Tue. Nov. 11**    General Meeting, Program: TBA
- Sat. Nov. 15**    Field trip to Denverton Slough
- Sat. Dec. 6**     Birding with Children Field Trip
- Tue. Dec. 9**     General Meeting, Program: TBA
- Sat. Dec. 13**    Scouting Field Trip for CBC
- Mon. Dec. 15**   Benicia Christmas Bird Count (CBC)

**Plus weekly Friday Bird Walks in & around Napa**

Please check the website for any last-minute updates regarding our events. [www.napasolanoaudubon.com](http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com)

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