



Song Sparrow

Quarterly Newsletter of the Napa-Solano Audubon Society
Volume 40 No.2 Winter 2009-2010

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

Benicia Christmas Bird Count

Become a Citizen Scientist!

Would you like to be part of the citizen science effort? No special background is needed to sign up for the December 14, 2009, 63rd Annual Benicia Christmas Bird Count (BCBC). There are many ways to participate: help count the number of birds and species seen in the area on a group hike; in a motorized boat, or canoe or kayak; by car; or from the comfort of your home at your bird feeder. If you love to cook, help by providing the birders with some hot entrées at the end of the day. Or, if you have an artistic bent, help set up and decorate tables.

The idea for a Christmas count germinated in an unlikely way in 1900 when hunters gathered at Christmas to see how many birds they could shoot in one day. Ornithologist Frank Chapman (1864-1945) proposed seeing how many birds could be counted, rather than shot—thus was born the modern Christmas count. Today groups throughout the country count within a 15-mile diameter circle during a 24-hour period between December 14 - January 5. The Benicia count, initiated in 1930 by resident Emerson Stoner, became an NSAS-sponsored citizen science project in 1971. Last year, 86 birders and 4 bird feeder watchers counted **172 species and 89,005 birds!** The Benicia CBC ranked in a tie for 31st place, out of 2,124 count circles in North America (based on number of species seen). Best of all, in 2008 the Benicia CBC found the highest numbers of Virginia rails (84) and was tied for the most black rails (3). *Contact Robin Leong: robin_leong@netzero.net or 707-643-1287, if you would like to participate in the count or help with the compilation dinner.*

2010 NSAS Calendars

Available Now

The beautiful 2010 National Audubon calendars are now on sale at a 20% discount to our Chapter members. Contact Cheryl Harris at 707-224-6133

www.napasolanoaudubon.com

Angwin Christmas Count

on New Years Day

Not able to participate on December 14? Perhaps you'd like to welcome in the New Year by spending an invigorating day with friends walking the hills of Napa Valley and beyond on the January 1st Angwin CBC; this will be the first year the Napa Solano Audubon has organized this event. You need not be an expert birder—all levels of experience are welcome.



Photo by Frank Toller

Be a spotter, a recorder, or help with other parts of the event. There will be a compilation dinner in St. Helena following the count, plus a **family birding workshop on Dec. 30!**

Murray Berner 707-224-5897 is the compiler for this count. For more information, or to sign up, call Laurie Hoppe at 707-963-2073. Watch for more information about the Benicia and Angwin CBCs on our NSAS Facebook page.

Visit NSAS on FACEBOOK

Access the latest information on Field Trips and Programs. To view our facebook page, type, or if online, copy and paste, this URL into your browser:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Napa-Solano-Audubon/164867857587>

NSAS Habitat Project Wins Environmental Award

NSAS president Cheryl Harris was recently awarded the Environmental Award by the Napa Chapter of the American Red Cross for NSAS' **Together Green** project: "Habitat Restoration on Vineyards, Ag Lands and Beyond." Launched in fall 2008, the project educates people about and demonstrates the importance of reestablishing diverse native vegetation and wildlife corridors on or near agricultural and other open space lands, for the benefit of birds, other wildlife and our community at large.

NSAS received a grant from **Together Green**, a program of National Audubon, with funding support from Toyota. Accomplishments this first year include:

- More than 150 bird boxes were constructed, then later installed in vineyards and other agricultural areas, Land Trust and open space properties by volunteer work parties—boy scouts, girl scouts, residents of the Yountville Veterans Home, and others.
- NSAS presented 5 workshops on various Habitat Restoration topics for the Ag community.
- NSAS members gave a number of community presentations on habitat preservation and restoration.
- Planning, design and installation of local demonstration hedgerows has begun.

Projects planned for spring 2010 include hands-on habitat improvements—removal of invasive weeds, planting native plants, and installing bird boxes, interpretive signs and demonstration hedgerows. Many thanks to those of you who have already given your time and energy to help make this **project a success!**

For more details about the project and to find out how you can help, please use the Habitat Project link on our website. Activities and events will also be posted on our Facebook page.



Photo by Alan Moore

Rare Western Sighting

Was it a Greater Ringed Daup—or perhaps a Ring-Necked Scau-Duck? Whatever it was, on Friday, November 13, birders on the NSAS Friday bird walk at Lake Hennessey were treated to the sight of a bird rarely seen in the West—a hybrid of a male Ring-necked Duck and Greater Scaup, thanks to the sharp eyes of Murray Berner. This bird was first seen here in December 2006 and has since returned each fall. Although duck hybrids are relatively common—almost any combination of species can produce live young—there are only one or two previous reports of this hybrid in North America, and none previous in the West. **Another good reason to join the Friday morning bird walks!**

Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in California

Submitted by Tom McNicholas

In Napa and the San Francisco Bay Area, we have an abundance of beautiful areas to explore: rivers, the bay, the ocean, an extensive river delta, the Mojave Desert, and the Sierra Nevada mountains. NSAS schedules trips that take us to see an extraordinary number and variety of bird species, especially those nearby areas designated by the National Audubon Society as Important Bird Areas (IBAs).

Audubon California has used the best science to identify and map the 145 IBAs in the state, which provide more than 10 million acres of essential habitat for breeding, wintering and migrating birds. Part of an international effort, these sites were nominated by local experts and selected according to strict criteria:

- Support over 1% of the global or 10% of the state population of 1 or more sensitive species
- Support more than 9 sensitive bird species
- 10,000 or more observable shorebirds in one day
- 5,000 or more observable waterfowl in one day

For maps of California IBAs, visit:

<http://ca.audubon.org/iba/ibamaps.php>

An Unkindness of Ravens

Submitted by Hilary Zunin

Ever wonder about the source of plural nouns such as "a murder of crows"? The authorship of the Book of St. Alban's (1486) is debated by academics, but part of it seems to be the work of Dame Julians Barnes the holder of a manor near St Albans in England. One section of the book features a "Treatise on Hawking and Heraldry" and a compilation of plural nouns describing birds. Three of my favorites are "a murmuration of starlings," "an exaltation of larks," and "an unkindness of ravens." For you fisherfolk: Dame Barnes is also credited with the first publication on fishing by a woman: "Treatise of Fishing with an Angle."



Photo by Alan Moore

CONGRATULATIONS 3 Winners of Photo Contest!

Submitted by Janet Thiessen

NSAS recently held a photo contest for photographs that will be part of the Society's new brochure. Five photographs were chosen from 61 entries (from 6 photographers). The board of directors chose the winning photos; and the winners are . . .

Alan Moore, Frank Toller & Dave McMullen

Congratulations to these fine contestants! We hope to obtain permission to display the entries of all contestants on our Web site or in our newsletter in the weeks to come. Robin Hutchings is at work putting together our new brochure with the winning photos; our goal is to have it ready for distribution at the San Francisco Flyway Festival in February.

Birding for Kids!

Wednesday, December 30, 2009 9am to 11am, St. Helena Library, 1492 Library Lane, St Helena. This special program—provided in conjunction with the 45th Annual Angwin Christmas Bird Count on New Year's Day—will teach students and their parents the basics of bird watching as well as how to become a "Citizen Scientist." NSAS and the St Helena Library are co-sponsoring this event, with funding support from a **Together Green Volunteer Days** grant -- from National Audubon Society and Toyota. The count circle, with a diameter of 15 miles, includes St Helena, Angwin, Lake Hennessey and part of Lake Berryessa. Students and parents who participate may also join in the count on Jan. 1 by watching their feeders or joining a group in the field. Audubon volunteers are needed to help with the 12/30/09 and 1/1/10 events.

Murray Berner (707-224-5897) is the compiler for this count. *Sign up children or grandchildren for the event at the St Helena's Library children's reference desk. Watch for more information about the Benicia and Angwin CBCs on our NSAS Facebook page.*

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 7pm with about 15 min of social time, sharing of birding experiences & refreshments; this is followed by announcements, a short period of chapter business (field trip, conservation, membership & special project reports); Each evening a special presentation by a guest speaker is offered. See below for details about our programs.

December Holiday Gathering Tuesday, December 8, 2009 ~ 7:00pm

Your photographs, stories, social time, dessert and a book exchange! We want to hear from you—bring your stories, pictures, old birding book or magazine and a dessert to share! We'll share a relaxing evening of camaraderie and inspiration, discovering new places to visit and new birds to enjoy. Bring your photos on CDs, DVDs, or 'memory sticks. We even have an old-fashioned slide projector—just let us know in advance what format your presentation will take. The book exchange will be a "bring one-take one" affair. NSAS will provide hot cider or chocolate—See you there!

The Farallons 40 Years Later Tuesday, January 12, 2010 ~ 7:00pm

Forty years ago, when Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO) established the Farallon Island Research Station, Ron LeValley was a young biologist who had volunteered as a bird bander for a number of years. Ron will share experiences he has had on the islands, discussing the changes that have taken place on the island and in the Farallon ecosystems, using his own photographs to illustrate his talk.

Ron LeValley, a nature photographer and former biologist for the PRBO, is a founding member of the Mendocino Coast Photographer Guild and Gallery. Founder of consulting firm Mad River Biologists in Eureka, California, Ron is best known for the identification and distribution of birds along the Pacific Coast. He is also associate editor of the journal Western Birds.



Photo by Ron LeValley

Pelagic Birds of the Central California Coast

Tuesday, February 9, 2010 ~ 7:00pm

Seabirds on the ocean thrill birders with their acrobatic exhibitions. Just offshore from the Monterey Peninsula in California a 'trench' plunges to 6,000', providing a cold-water upwelling rich in nutrients supporting unusually abundant food for seabirds. This slideshow program will familiarize attendees with fall bird migration patterns in the area and provide information about taking a pelagic trip in Monterey. *NSAS members Tom McNicholas and Alan Moore are the presenters.*

Monthly Field Trips

Unless otherwise noted, the following applies to all 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 David at davidtakeuchi@aol.com (enter: "Subject: Field Trip").

Bring snacks and liquids, and pack a lunch and be prepared to carry it. 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 welcome on most field trips.

CARPOOL LOCATIONS: **Cordelia:** 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 Sports,, 1537 W. Imola Avenue, between Coombs and Jefferson St.

Check the details for the specific trip to see which carpool locations will be used for that trip. The Carpool times listed are **departure** times. Please arrive early. Finally, 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.

Benicia Christmas Count Preview

Saturday, December 12, 2009

LEADER: Robin Leong

DESTINATION LOCATION: Benicia Christmas Count Circle [the center of the Benicia count is on Highway 680, approximately 1.5 miles north of Pierce Lane.]

TRIP INFORMATION: Robin Leong is this year's Christmas Count chairman. Pre-count can be done for 3 days consecutive days before count day and post-count is done for 3 days after count day (Dec. 12). We will be checking out various areas in the count circle, adding birds we may not see on count day. Bring a lunch.

CARPOOL LOCATION AND TIME: Napa, 7:30 am. Vallejo, 8:00am - 2:00pm

Post Angwin Christmas Bird Count

Sunday, January 3, 2010

LEADER: Murray Berner

DESTINATION LOCATION: Various locations in the Angwin Christmas Bird Count.

TRIP INFORMATION: Following the New Year's Day Angwin Christmas Bird Count, we will seek out the rare or uncommon birds found during the count, and perhaps add one or two "count week" birds to the total. We'll visit St. Helena hot spots such as the Beringer Ponds, where Barrow's Goldeneye is often present, as well as the wastewater treatment plant on Chaix Lane. Other possible destinations include Lake Hennessey for Northern Pygmy-Owl and Red-necked Grebe, Los Posadas State Forest for Pygmy Nuthatch, and Sage Canyon for who-knows-what. Carpooling is essential for this trip, which involves many short stops at various locations. Bring a lunch.

CARPOOL LOCATION AND TIME: Leave from Napa carpool loc. at 8:00am. The field trip will end by 2:00pm.

San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival

Friday - Sunday, February 5-7, 2010

TRIP INFORMATION: This family-oriented festival held on Mare Island in Vallejo celebrates our region's prime location as a migratory spot on the Pacific Flyway. The schedule includes guided birding walks, self-guided tours, boat trips, children's crafts, avian exhibitions, art exhibitions, optic vendors, book sales and demonstrations. Members of Napa Solano Audubon lead several field trips throughout this event. Check the Flyway Fest Web site:

<http://www.sfbayflywayfestival.com> closer to the event date.

Davis Wetlands

Saturday, February 13, 2010

LEADER: John Sterling

DESTINATION LOCATION: Meet at the Vic Fazio Wildlife Area Headquarters building (not the wildlife area) on County Road 32B [(labeled Chiles Road in Davis) (45211 County Road 32B, Davis, CA)] at 9:00 am.

DIRECTIONS: For directions and information see: <http://www.mapquest.com/>

TRIP INFORMATION: With guest leader John Sterling we will visit wetlands in the region, including the Davis wetlands, where several rare gull species were found in Feb. 2008. Bring a lunch. John Sterling, a professional ornithologist and president of the Central Valley Bird Club who has been birding in California since 1971, is writing a book on the status and distribution of the birds of California. He is founder of Sterling Wildlife Biology.

CARPOOL LOCATION AND TIME: Napa: 7:45 am. Vallejo: 8:00 am. Cordelia: 8:15 am. Trip ends at 4:00 pm.

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

Event Calendar At-A-Glance

December 2009 – June 2010

WINTER 2009

Tuesday, Dec 8	December Social and Sharing
Saturday, Dec 12	Field Trip: CBC Pre-count
Monday, Dec 14	CBC: Benicia CBC, plus Compilation Dinner
Wednesday, Dec 30	Birding for Kids!—Family Birding Workshop

SPRING 2010

Friday, Jan 1	CBC: Angwin CBC plus Compilation Dinner
Sunday, Jan 3	Field Trip: Post-CBC Count
Tuesday, Jan 12	Program: Farallon Islands
Friday-Sun, Feb 5-7	Festival: SF Bay Flyway Festival
Tuesday, Feb 9	Program: Slideshow/Pelagic Birds in Monterey Bay
Saturday, Feb 13	Field Trip: Davis Wetlands
Friday-Sun, Feb 12-14	Great Backyard Bird Count
Sunday, Mar 21	Field Trip: Point Reyes National Seashore
Saturday, Apr 17	Field Trip: Long Canyon, Napa County
Tuesday-Sat, May 4-8	Field Trip: Southern Nevada (by reservation only)
Saturday, May 15	Field Trip: Putah Creek, Woodland (visit to Manfred Kusch's property)
Saturday, Jun 19	Field Trip: Birding and Gourmet Picnic

For the latest information visit us online:
www.facebook.com and/or www.napasolanoaudubon.com.

Napa-Solano Audubon Society

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at red-tail@comcast.net.



Ron LeValley

Photo by Ron LeValley

Napa Solano Audubon Society

Our Mission

Our mission is to share the fun of birding, promote conservation and scientific understanding of wild birds and their habitats, and offer engaging, science-based education emphasizing the communities of Napa and Solano counties.