



# SONG SPARROW

FALL 2014 Vol. 41 No. 2  
www.napasolanoaudubon.com

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Summer was a busy time for NSAS! We said goodbye to outgoing president, Cheryl, and welcomed two new board members: Laura Erickson and Andrew Ford. Our new logo, designed by Laura, is inspired by the two subspecies of Salt Marsh Song Sparrow, *samuelis* and *maxillaris*, that live in our counties.

The monthly Beginning Birding Workshops continued, focusing on how feathers, bills, and feet are adapted to help birds survive. And, we taught sessions at American Canyon Parks and Rec's summer camp on topics like habitat, nesting, and migration.

Citizen Science had a renewed focus. Working with a biologist from Audubon Canyon Ranch, NSAS volunteers observed and collected weekly data on more than 40 heron and egret nests in the Vine Village rookery. And, we partnered with Solano Land Trust to monitor 38 nest boxes in Lynch Canyon.

In the coming months, NSAS will continue popular events such as Friday walks, and monthly field trips and programs, and we will strengthen our emphasis on education, citizen science, and habitat conservation.

We will partner with American Canyon High School and Donaldson Way Elementary on a youth mentorship program, and thanks to a grant from Napa County Conservation Commission, create two nest box trails. We will also launch several conservation projects including invasive plant removal and stream restoration, beginning in American Canyon and expanding into Vallejo and Suisun.

As always, NSAS depends on your help! We need youth mentors, nest box monitors, help with habitat restoration, and staffing at our tables at future events. To volunteer or donate, visit our web page. I look forward to meeting you at one of our walks or events! – *Wendy Schackwitz, NSAS President*

## CITIZEN SCIENCE TAKES FLIGHT

Our chapter members participated in two Citizen Science projects this year with much enthusiasm. Our first project started this spring as NSAS members began monitoring nesting herons at the request of the **North Bay Heron and Egret Project (HEP)**.



*Great Egret - Photo by Michael Gene Stewart*

The Heron and Egret Project is part of a collaborative effort by Audubon Canyon Ranch (ACR) and the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBBO) to monitor colonially nesting herons and egrets in the San Francisco Bay Area. Our team was organized by Wendy Schackwitz and Emiko Condeso, an Ecologist/GIS Specialist with Audubon Canyon Ranch.

The team observed and recorded data from early March through June at a beautiful location in Congress Valley in Napa County. We witnessed four species (Great Egret, Great Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, and Snowy Egret) in 40+ nests. It was a wonderful and memorable experience to observe these beautiful birds having a very successful year.

Our second Citizen Science project was a combined effort with Solano Land Trust. At our March 2014 general meeting, Solano Land Trust presented plans for a western bluebird monitoring program in Lynch Canyon and invited NSAS

members to participate. Thirteen volunteers took a bluebird monitoring class and were divided into three teams to cover the three bird box trails.



*Western bluebird and fledgling - Photo by Michael Gene Stewart*

Each team began making trips to Lynch Canyon every 7 to 10 days to inspect the boxes for activity, such as nest building, eggs, and hatchlings. The results of those inspections were recorded online.

The total number of bluebirds fledged was 23; 20 were lost to predation; 2 died in the nest; and 5 eggs were abandoned. Tree swallows, house wrens, and ash-throated flycatchers also nested in the bird boxes.

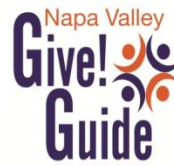
There are plans to set up more boxes in other areas of Lynch Canyon, which means there will be a need for additional monitors in the future.

## JOIN US AT TWO LOCAL FESTIVALS

Napa-Solano Audubon will participate in two local festivals in September. The **Visions of the Wild Festival** will celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Wilderness Act from September 3 – 6 in downtown Vallejo. Organized by the U.S. Forest Service, the festival will feature art shows, speakers, films, music, youth activities and field trips with a mix of free and fee events. We will have an exhibit throughout the four-day festival and a field trip on September 6. Go to [www.visionsofthewild.org](http://www.visionsofthewild.org) for more information.

The **Optics and Nature Fair** takes place on September 14 from 10am to 4pm at Cornerstone Gardens at 23570 Arnold Drive in Sonoma. Sponsored by Sonoma Birding, the festival features live hawks, owls and bats, art and music along with most of the major binoculars and scopes companies in the USA and extraordinary nature organizations. We will also exhibit at this free, family-friendly event. Go to [www.sonomabirding.com](http://www.sonomabirding.com) for more information.

## SECOND EDITION OF GIVE! GUIDE

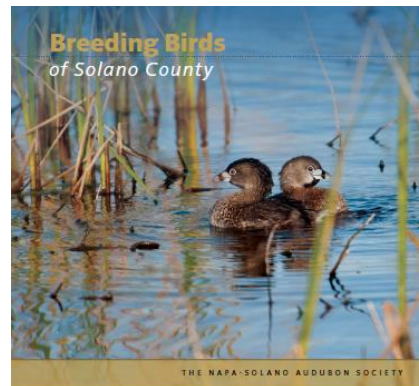


We are excited to have been selected again this year as one of 40 non-profits featured in the second edition of the Napa Valley Give!Guide. The Give!Guide offers a quick and easy way to donate small or large amounts to your favorite Napa Valley non-profit organizations online. The campaign runs from November 1 through December 31. Watch for the Give!Guide in November and more information on our website, including daily incentives and special offers.

## KIDS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT IS COMING

This year Napa-Solano Audubon will be offering a fun and rewarding event for kids and their parents to share the excitement of being outdoors in nature. We're starting a Christmas Bird Count for Kids in early December. Look for more information on our website and Facebook pages later in the fall.

## ALMOST HERE



We apologize for the many delays, but The *Breeding Birds of Solano County* will be here soon. *Really!* The Atlas has been printed and is now at the bindery in Italy. When the binding is completed, the Atlases will be shipped to California. We will let you know when they arrive and will celebrate with a book signing party and more. So keep checking our website for more updates.

## AMERICAN CANYON BIRDWALKS

Join us for Beginning Birding Walks and Workshops at American Canyon Wetlands on Wetlands Edge Road and Eucalyptus Drive, usually on the first Saturday of the month. Workshops begin at 9 a.m. near the American Canyon Wetlands parking lot, followed by bird walks at 9:30 until noon. The walks are on flat ground and appropriate for all ages (children must be accompanied by an adult). Bring binoculars if you have them and water. Contact Wendy at [napa-solano-birds@outlook.com](mailto:napa-solano-birds@outlook.com) for more information.

## September 6: Habitat Workshop & Bird Walk

What are the elements that create a wildlife habitat? How can you create a wildlife sanctuary in your own yard? We will explore the things a bird needs to live its life and explain how you can take a few easy steps to create a wildlife habitat in your own yard. After the 30 minute workshop, you will take a short walk through the five different habitats that American Canyon Wetlands provides.

## October 4: Project Feeder Watch & Bird Walk

If the winter weather has you spending more time indoors, but you still want to watch birds, this is for you! Project Feeder Watch is a Citizen Science project that records birds visiting your yard during the winter months. During this workshop we will discuss how you can participate, how the data are collected, and what scientists have used the data for. We'll follow with a walk on the trails in American Canyon Wetlands.

## November 1: Migration & Bird Walk

Ever wonder why migrating geese fly in a V? Or why migrating hawks and vultures fly around in big circles? This month we will answer these questions and explore why some birds migrate and others stay put.

## PROGRAMS MOVE TO 2<sup>nd</sup> THURSDAY

General Meetings will now be held on the **second Thursday** of the month at the Florence Douglas Senior Center, 333 Amador Street in Vallejo (see map on our website). Meetings begin at 7 p.m. with about 15 minutes of social time and refreshments, followed by announcements and a special presentation by a guest speaker. Please note this **new day of the month for our programs**.

## WAYS OF TRACKING BIRDS AND WHAT MAY BE LEARNED - Thursday, September 11 | 7 p.m.

Researchers of avian ecology have benefited from a variety of methods to follow the activities of individual birds in order to glean new information and insights about bird behavior. In recent years, the types of methodologies have expanded and allowed a whole new level of insights that had not before been marking types, considerations of logistics required when applying each of these methods, and the information provided using examples from marking projects conducted by the USGS San Francisco Bay Estuary Field Station in Vallejo, California. Kyle Spragens is a Wildlife Biologist for the USGS San Francisco Bay Estuary Field Station. Kyle's research interests focus on the migratory ecology of waterbirds, with special emphasis on waterfowl.

## INTERNATIONAL BIRD RESCUE – LIFE AFTER RELEASE - Thursday, October 9 | 7:00 p.m.

Each year, International Bird Rescue (IBR) receives approximately 5000 aquatic birds between their two year-round wildlife clinics that serve Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay. IBR continually works to improve the care of wild aquatic birds whether coming into temporary captivity due to oiling, illness, parental separation, or injury. Dr. Rebecca Duerr, clinical veterinarian and Director of Research at IBR's two wildlife clinics, will tell us about IBR's mission and some of the remarkable stories of individual birds after their recovery and release, through information garnered from resightings, restrandings, and band returns.

## BIRDSCAPING

### Thursday, November 13 | 7:00 p.m.

Food, water, shelter, and nesting sites – the ingredients for attracting birds to your backyard. East Bay naturalist, Michael Marchiano, reviews some of our common backyard visitors and what to do to encourage the local birds to come to your yard. He encourages the use of native plants in landscaping and the non-use of insecticides, herbicides and rodenticides. His presentation will focus on identifying birds, as well as types of feeders and food to attract particular birds. He will touch on enticing healthy insect and butterfly populations in your yard. Michael is on the Board of Directors for Mount Diablo Interpretive Society and is the Resident Naturalist at Wild Birds Unlimited in Pleasant Hill.

## UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Specific field trip and carpool information is always on our website. Sign up for the email notification list on our website at [www.napasolanoaudubon.com](http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com) to receive detailed field trip information or special announcements. Note: Some field trips require RSVPs to the trip coordinator.

## HUICHICA CREEK

### Sunday, September 14 | Leave 7:30 a.m. and return 1 p.m. Leader: Murray Berner

There is a lot of activity at Huichica Creek Wildlife Area--big flocks of white birds, gulls and terns, migrating ducks and shorebirds, including Semi-palmated Sandpiper, Pintail and Snowy Plover. This is a 2.3 mile loop on level ground through salt ponds, marsh, and grasslands. We might hurry out the first 1/2 mile to an area of interesting shorebird activity. It can be chilly early. Facilities at the parking lot. **Directions:** Napa carpool departs at 7:30 a.m. from the east side of Sweeney's Sport Store in the River Park Shopping Center on Imola Ave. between Jefferson and Coombs. **Bring:** Lunch, water, \$ for carpool gas, comfortable walking shoes, binoculars, layers.

## COYOTE HILLS REGIONAL PARK/DON EDWARDS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

**Saturday, October 18 | Leave 8:00 a.m. Leader: TBD**

Coyote Hills Regional Park and Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge are located just north and south of the Dumbarton Bridge in Fremont. Coyote Hills is part of the East Bay Regional Park District and Don Edwards is part of the San Francisco National Wildlife Refuge system. Located along the salt marshes and evaporation ponds, the two areas are a winter home to dozens of migratory water fowl and shorebirds with some stopping over for feeding and resting on their way further in their migration. We will see migrating water fowl and shorebirds, rails, wading birds, raptors and some upland birds. There are numerous trails along the waterways. Longer trails can be up to 3.5 miles long. **This trip requires reservations. Please RSVP to Bruce Thomsen** at (707) 224-1906 or email [brucehthomsen@yahoo.com](mailto:brucehthomsen@yahoo.com) **by October 8. Directions:** Napa carpool departs at 8:00 am from the east side of Sweeney's Sport Store in the River Park Shopping Center. Riverpark is on Imola Avenue between Jefferson and Coombs. Take Interstate 80 toward San Francisco/Oakland. Take the Hwy 880 junction south (toward Oakland and San Jose). Go south toward Fremont and exit Hwy 880 at Hwy 84 (Dumbarton Bridge). Exit Hwy 84 at Paseo Padre Parkway going north to Patterson Ranch Road. Take a right on Patterson Ranch Road heading west to Coyote Hills Regional Park Visitor Center. **Bring:** Lunch, water, \$ for carpool gas, comfortable walking shoes, binoculars, and layers. Reservations required for this field trip.

## BODEGA BAY

**Saturday, November 15 | Time and Leader: TBD**

View waterfowl, as well as a Eurasian Wigeon in the harbor, and unusual birds near the boat launch ramp at Westside Park. (Emperor Goose and Steller's Eider have hung out here in the past.) Late in the month, Rough-legged and Ferruginous Hawks may be seen. Look off-shore from the headlands for pelagic species that may have been blown close to shore by storms. A few very rare Eastern migrants may be found in Owl Canyon or in the trees lining the road to the "Hole-In-The-Head". Go to our website for directions and updates closer to the date.

## AMERICAN CANYON/PRE-CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SCOUTING

**Saturday, December 13 | Leader: Robin Leong**

Experience coastal bird migration in a location that is becoming a favorite shorebird viewing location. This area is part of the Pacific Flyway for migrating waterfowl. We expect to see winter ducks and woodland birds in the

Eucalyptus trees. If the tide is accommodating, we will see shore birds. We may see raptors and perhaps a falcon. We will bird Eucalyptus Drive and the American Canyon Wetlands trail, and then continue to do some pre-bird count scouting at areas to be determined. **Directions:** Meet at parking lot on the corner of Wetlands Edge Road and Eucalyptus Drive. **Bring:** Water, comfortable walking shoes, binoculars, and layers.



*Green-winged Teal – Photo by Pamela Rose Hawken*

## FALL 2014 CALENDAR AT-A-GLANCE

Sept. 3 – 6	Event: <i>Visions of the Wild Festival</i>
Sat, Sept. 6	AC Bird Walk & Habitat Workshop
Thurs, Sept. 11	Program: <i>Ways of Tracking Birds and What May Be Learned</i>
Sun, Sept. 14	Field Trip: <i>Huichica Creek</i>
Sun, Sept. 14	Event: <i>Optics &amp; Nature Fair</i>
Sat, Oct. 4	AC Bird Walk & Project Feeder Watch
Thurs, Oct. 9	Program: <i>International Bird Rescue – Life After Release</i>
Sat, Oct. 18	Field Trip: <i>Coyote Hills Regional Park &amp; Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge</i>
Sat, Nov. 1	AC Bird Walk & Migration Workshop
Thurs, Nov. 13	Program: <i>Birdscaping</i>
Sat, Nov. 15	Field Trip: <i>Bodega Bay</i>
Early Dec.	Kids Christmas Bird Count
Sat, Dec. 13	Field Trip: <i>AC/Pre-CBC Scouting</i>
Mon, Dec. 15	Benicia Christmas Bird Count

Watch for email updates or check the NSAS website at [www.napasolanoaudubon.com](http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com) for more information.