



SONG SPARROW

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www.napasolanoaudubon.com

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

After a recent stroll around the beautiful wetlands of American Canyon, I was very wistful. Shortly, many of our winter birds will be leaving for their northern breeding grounds, and I will miss their vivacious presence.

Thinking about the hazardous journey my friends were about to embark upon, my thoughts were a little gloomy because I had just returned from another location that is critical to the Flyway, the Salton Sea, which I visited as part of the quarterly meeting of Audubon California's Board. Unlike the beautifully restored wetlands of American Canyon, this habitat is headed in the wrong direction.

If nothing changes, scientists predict that the Sea will triple in salinity and be reduced in area by 30% in the next 30 years. This is especially bad news for one of my favorite birds, the Eared Grebe, as estimates are that 90% of all Eared Grebes winter at the Salton Sea. Audubon California is investigating ways to turn the tide for this inland sea, so stay tuned for more information about how you can help.

On a more positive note, we heard at the meeting that there is finally some good news for the Tricolored Blackbird! The Tricolored Blackbird is in steep decline due to its habit of nesting in hay and grain fields that are harvested before nestlings fledge. But recently, it was given emergency protection under the CA Endangered Species Act, and more than \$1.1 million was approved to compensate farmers who delay their harvest and fund additional research. Join us at our program on March 10, where Dr. Robert Meese from UC Davis will discuss the current plight and state of the "Trikes".

In addition to this great program, NSAS has several upcoming events and activities. From walks on Friday mornings to assisting with heron and bluebird nest monitoring, we have many ways for our members to get involved. You can find more details on our web page at www.napasolanoaudubon.com. I look forward to meeting you soon at an upcoming event!

--Wendy Schackwitz, NSAS President

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Spring is going to be a busy season for our chapter. Not only do we have great programs and field trips planned in the months ahead, but we will be launching many of our citizen science projects. Solano Land Trust (SLT) has asked us to join them again this year on their bluebird monitoring project in Lynch Canyon. Some of our members just finished pounding new posts and repairing or mounting new bird boxes in Lynch Canyon. This year the monitoring program begins in March and will expand to Rush Ranch. SLT is still looking for additional monitors at both locations. Contact Sue Wickham at sue@solanolandtrust.org, if interested.



Western Bluebird by Dave McMullen

Audubon Canyon Ranch is also looking for heron and egret monitors as part of their North Bay Heron and Egret Project (HEP). Last year some of our members monitored a heron rookery in Congress Valley. This year the project is looking for help in Campbell Ranch, Congress Valley, South Kelly, and the Benicia Pier. If you are interested, contact Emiko Condeso at 707-364-3274 or emiko.condeso@egret.org.

April 25 is a very full day. Not only are we sponsoring a field trip to Sonoma that day, but we will have exhibits at the 25th Rush Ranch Open House in Suisun and the Earth Day celebration in downtown Napa. Both are from 10 to 3 p.m. and are free, fun, family events, featuring music, art, games, demonstrations and exhibits. So consider joining us either as a participant or volunteer at one of these events.

JUNIOR AUDUBON LAUNCHES

After helping coordinate the first Napa County CBC 4 Kids this past December, NSAS has continued the momentum of kid-friendly birding with the launch of a local Junior Audubon group. Many people catch the birding bug young, between the ages of 10-15. Younger birders tend to be highly motivated and skilled, but have difficulty finding ways to connect to each other. They often get lost in large, adult-oriented bird outings. Junior Audubon hopes to remedy these issues for local birding youth by providing a group exclusively for younger birders. The group is free and meets once a month for two hours. Parental attendance is optional. The outings are set in different habitats at locations near Napa and focus on improving birding skills and learning bird ecology.

The next walk will be on **March 7 from 8:30 to 10:30 in Timberhill Park**. This is a 1.5 mile trail loop through an oak-bay forest that leads to a grassy view point. White-throated, Rufus crowned, and lark sparrow are all possible, while varied thrushes are common. Meet on Timberhill Lane and park where the street ends at the trail head. For more detailed directions, go to our website at www.napasolanoaudubon.com. Binoculars and field guides will be provided. The group's leader, Alex Greene, is a young educator who began his birding career at age 13. You can call him at 317-432-8667 with questions.

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 Wetlands parking lot, followed by bird walks at 9:30 until noon. 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 for more information.

March 7th: Basic Bird Identification & Bird Walk

How do the experts tell all the different species apart? Hear tips for finding and identifying typical California birds, including how to identify a bird just from its silhouette!

April 4th: Bird Song & Bird Walk

Why do birds sing? How can you tell birds apart by their songs? You will learn to ID five different birds from their song alone, and discuss apps for your smartphone that can help you learn more songs and identify birds in your yard and in the field.

May 2nd: Nesting

What are the different kinds of nests that birds build? Try your hand at building a nest yourself. Find out about active nests with living birds that you can watch from your computer. Several different types of nests will be available for you to look at up close, and we will watch for more nests on our walk.

June 6: Adaptations - Feathers & Bird Walk

Birds are the only living things that have feathers. Humans have a long history of fascination with feathers, using them as decorations, in our bedding, and as inspiration for developing the airplane. During this workshop we will explore a little of this history, as well as discuss all of the functions a feather has for birds.

July 4: Adaptations - Feet & Bird Walk

Did you know some birds can't walk? Or that birds use their legs as a thermostat? Some even use their toes as bait while fishing! During this workshop we will explore the different things birds use their feet for.

August 1: Adaptations - Beaks & Bird Walk

Ever wonder why some bird's bills are so different from another? Why does a duck have such a wide bill, a hummingbird such a long skinny bill, and why is the flamingo's bill "upside down?" We will explore why bird bills have become the way they are.

PROGRAMS

Please note dates and venues for the following programs. In **March**, we will be meeting in the Fairfield-Cordelia Library Meeting Room at **5050 Business Center Drive** off of the Green Valley Road exit in Fairfield. In **April** and **May**, we will meet at the **Florence Douglas Senior Center** at 333 Amador Street in Vallejo to accommodate the speaker's commute and the need for a kitchen. Go to our website at www.napasolanoaudubon.com for directions.

THE PLIGHT OF THE TRICOLORED BLACKBIRD

Tues, March 10 | 7:00 p.m. | Fairfield-Cordelia Library

The population of California's iconic tricolored blackbird has suffered a dramatic decline in the past six years—64% since 2008, according to a survey coordinated by the University of California, Davis. The state is now home to just 145,000 of these birds, which live almost exclusively in California. Years ago the population numbered in the millions. Robert Meese, UC Davis Staff Research Associate, and coordinator of the 2014 Tricolored Blackbird Statewide Survey, presents the reasons for the decline and where we can focus our recovery efforts.

JOHN MUIR LAWS – THINKING LIKE A NATURALIST: RECLAIMING THE ART OF NATURAL HISTORY - Thursday, April 9 | 7:00 p.m. | Florence Douglas Senior Center in Vallejo

Join noted naturalist John Muir Laws for this very special program. Learn how to get more out of every nature ramble. Developments in neuropsychology have opened doors in our understanding of the brain and cognition and how you can train yourself to see more and to be more curious about what you discover. Naturalist and illustrator John Muir Laws will demonstrate simple and fun techniques you can incorporate into your own recreational nature study or to share with others. A perfect experience for anyone interested in taking their birding and nature study to the next level. Naturalist, educator, author and artist John (Jack) Muir Laws is a trained wildlife biologist and a Research Associate of the California Academy of Sciences, who has been a nature education teacher since 1984 in California, Wyoming and Alaska.

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION PARTY AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTIONS - Tuesday, May 12 | 7:00 p.m. | Florence Douglas Senior Center in Vallejo

Join us for a salute to our extraordinary volunteers with appetizers, desserts, wine, and beer. We will also elect our Board of Directors for the upcoming year and have a few very special, short presentations.

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 to receive detailed field trip information or special announcements. **Note:** Some field trips require RSVPs to the trip coordinator.

LAKE SOLANO COUNTY PARK

Sat., March 14 | Leave 8:45 a.m. | Leader: Robin Leong

Lake Solano County Park lies adjacent to the quiet-water stretch of Putah Creek between Lake Berryessa and Winters. We expect to get a good look at wintering waterfowl including Wood Ducks, Common and Hooded Mergansers, Common and Barrow's Goldeneyes, and Ring-necked Ducks. Bald Eagle and Osprey are seen often. We will check the park's trees for resident Phainopeplas, Lewis' Woodpeckers and others, and we can expect to see wintering raptors. We will be joined by the Ohlone Audubon group for this trip. Check the weather; cancelled if it's raining. Dress warmly. **Bring:** Binoculars or spotting scope, water and lunch or go to lunch in Winters afterwards with the Ohlone group.

SUTTER BUTTES - FULL

Sat., March 28 | Leave 6 a.m. | Leader: Pete Sands, Docent Sutter Buttes Land Trust, CBC organizer

This hike provides access to the privately owned Sutter Buttes valleys, hillsides, and peaks. Guides share its unique origin and history and examine a natural ecology that has become increasingly rare in our time. We will look for migratory birds in the Sutter Buttes, an area only visited with a docent from the Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust. This is an easy 3-mile walk laced with wildflowers in bloom. Trip is limited to 12 people, costs \$25 and **requires reservations. This trip is currently full.** Please contact Wendy Cole at beehaven2@comcast.net if you want to be placed on a waiting list. **Bring:** Lunch, water, comfortable walking shoes, binoculars, and dress in layers. Carpool directions on our website.

PINE FLAT ROAD/IDA CLAYTON ROAD/ SONOMA

Sat., April 25 | Leave 7 a.m. | Leader: Gordon Beebe

Join us for spring birding along Pine Flat Rd. and Ida Clayton Rd. in Sonoma County. We will be on the lookout for mountain quail, band-tail pigeons, pileated woodpeckers, olive-sided flycatchers, Pacific-slope flycatchers, western kingbird, purple martin, blue grey gnatcatcher, California thrasher, and Bell's sparrow. **Bring:** Lunch, water, comfortable walking shoes, and binoculars. The Jimtown Store is in the area, but we may not be close enough for lunch. Carpool directions on our website.

BLACK DIAMOND MINES REGIONAL PRESERVE

Sat., May 23 | Leave 8:45 a.m. | Leader: TBD

Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve is notable as California's largest coal mine. This 6,096 acre preserve consists of chaparral, foothill woodland, grasslands, riparian, and an evergreen forest that makes up the north east approach to Mt. Diablo. A tour of the mine is also available for those interested after birding (\$5.00/person). **Bring:** Lunch, water, comfortable walking shoes, and binoculars. Carpool directions on our website.

SUPPORT US THROUGH AMAZON SMILE

If you are ordering any items through Amazon.com, consider using Amazon's fundraising program, **AmazonSmile**. Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible purchases to the non-profit of your choice, at no cost to you when you shop at smile.amazon.com. Go to smile.amazon.com and enter **Napa Solano Audubon** in the **Search** field. Then click **Select** and shop as you normally would.

SPRING 2015 CALENDAR AT-A-GLANCE

Sat, March 7	AC Bird Walk & Basic Bird Identification
Sat, March 7	Junior Audubon Walk – Timberhill Park
Tues, March 10	Program: Plight of Tricolored Blackbird
Sat, March 14	Field Trip: Lake Solano County Park
Sat, March 28	Field Trip: Sutter Buttes - Full
Sat, April 4	AC Bird Walk & Bird Song Workshop
Thurs, April 9	Program: John Muir Laws on “Thinking Like a Naturalist”
Sat, April 25	Field Trip: Pine Flat & Ida Clayton Rds.
Sat, April 25	Earth Day Celebration in Napa
Sat, April 25	Rush Ranch Open House in Suisun
Sat, May 2	AC Bird Walk & Nesting Workshop
Tues, May 12	Program: Elections & Volunteer Appreciation Party
Sat, May 23	Field Trip: Black Diamond Mines
Sat, June 6	AC Bird Walk & Feathers Workshop
Sat, July 4	AC Bird Walk – Adaptations: Feet
Sat, August 1	AC Bird Walk – Adaptations: Beaks

Watch for email updates or check the NSAS website at www.napasolanoaudubon.com for more information.

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

NSAS BOARD MEMBERS

President	Wendy Schackwitz
Vice President	Dr. John Glover
Treasurer	Betty Mosher
Secretary	Diane Ley
Membership Chair	Sally Baumer
Webmaster	Dave McMullen
Field Trip Co-Chairs	Bruce Thomsen & Wendy Cole

Please check our website for a complete list of Board Members. The Board meets in the evening, usually on the last Monday of the month, except in the summer. All members are welcome.

Are you interested in serving on the Board or one of our committees? We will have Board elections in May, and we have many openings on our committees, including Education, Programs, Conservation, and Publicity & Outreach. If you are interested in helping at any level or wish to serve on the board, contact Wendy Schackwitz at napa-solano-birds@outlook.com.

