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Fires Fueled by Climate Change

Drought and insects killing millions of trees

July 2016 was the warmest month on Earth since records were kept starting in 1880, according to a recent NASA statement. These increasing temperatures are putting over 170 California birds at risk due to shifting habitats, as the 2014 Audubon “Birds and Climate Change” report showed. Wildfires of increased size and intensity are another, more direct threat attributable to climate change.

So far this year, over 350,000 acres have been scorched in California, along with hundreds of homes. CAL FIRE reports that the number of acres burned this year is 50% higher than the recent average in their territory.

These fires are fueled by an increasing number of dead or dying trees. In June, the US Forest Service announced that over 66 million trees have died in California since 2010 due to drought and bark beetles. For comparison, they reported 29 million dead trees in 2015 and 3.3 million in 2014.

Drought has been linked to climate change through computer models, study of snowpack trends, and other research. But what is the connection between beetles and climate change?

As winter temperatures have increased, more bark beetles have been able to survive from year to year. Healthy trees are able to repel beetles through production of sap, but drought-stricken trees are unable to produce



A forest of dead trees outside Fresno

enough sap to counter the insects. Once a tree is afflicted, there is no known way to rescue it.

While fire is a natural part of many ecosystems, the combination of dry conditions, dead trees, and years of fire suppression policies produces catastrophic “megafires”.

Unfortunately, all this has a compounding effect on climate change. Trees consume carbon dioxide to produce energy, so fewer trees mean more greenhouse gases. And, as trees burn, the carbon they have stored is released back into the atmosphere: a 2015 UC Berkeley study found that 5% to 7% of California’s carbon emissions could be attributed to forest fires.

Drought, fire, and shifting habitats are potentially devastating to California birds. Further, when trees are killed by insects, the Forest Service removes those trees to help limit fire potential, further disrupting birds.

Audubon encourages you to support initiatives that help counter climate change. Let your representatives know that you are in favor of bills like SB32, which extends California’s climate efforts by 10 years. And, be sure to vote for birds this November!

Audubon Getting Results

Several milestones were reached this summer in bird conservation, thanks in large part to efforts from Audubon California and local chapters.

In June, Measure AA passed with a resounding 69% of the vote. This measure initiates a \$12 annual tax on each parcel of land starting July 2017, with funds being used for projects to restore, protect, or enhance natural habitats around SF Bay.

Potential projects in the North Bay area could range from creation of bird islands in the Napa River, to improving water flow to marshes along Highway 37, to restoring tidal marshes in Suisun Bay. The first projects funded by this measure are planned to begin in early 2018.

On July 1, Phase 2 of the process to ban lead ammunition went into effect, resulting from a 2013 bill sponsored by Audubon California. With a few exceptions, hunters across the state are now required to use non-lead shot. A complete ban on lead ammunition goes into effect in 2019.

Also in July, Audubon California announced that through agreements with farmers in the Central Valley, 100% of Tricolored Blackbird colonies on farmland were saved this year! While thousands of birds have been saved in the past five years through similar agreements, this was the first year that all known colonies in agricultural fields were protected.

Acres of US burned in wildfires



INSIDE

Update on education programs
Audubon Assembly coming soon
Record number of fledglings

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

My job is to keep NSAS true to the four pillars of our mission: Education, Birding, Conservation, and Citizen Science. And wow, you all hit it out of the park last year!

Our educational activities reached nearly 800 kids, we gave out \$4,000 in scholarships, and we designed birding trail signs for Lake Hennessey. Our Field Trip team organized a week-long trip to Arizona; Andrew Ford began leading our weekly walks, patiently sharing his knowledge of nature; and we expanded our Beginning Birding Workshops to Solano County. Our Citizen Science teams monitored bluebird, heron, and Tricolored Blackbird populations. And, we fought for Measure AA, joined Advocacy Day in Sacramento, and wrote letters advocating for the environment.

We also had fun while raising funds to support our efforts. In April, we held our first CHIRP! Festival which included a Warbler ID Workshop, a Gala dinner and silent auction featuring the movie *Pelican Dreams*, plus our first Bird-a-thon, raising nearly \$5,000.

And while last year was a big success, the coming year holds even greater promise.

First, I am excited to announce we have a new Conservation Chair, Nancy Piotrowski. Nancy joined me at Advocacy Day, where we met with our local representatives. She impressed me with her passion, balanced with tact, and I set my sights on convincing her to join our Board as our Conservation Chair. And lucky for us, she has agreed!

Another new face you will see is Stephan Berlyant, who will be joining us as an NSAS Intern and assisting our Educational Coordinator. I met Stephan last year at the Sonoma CBC, where he was instrumental in helping us document Napa County's first record of a Winter Wren. He also participated on a CHIRP! Bird-a-thon team that logged 125 species in Napa county. A recent high school graduate, Stephen will be attending Napa Valley College this coming year.

Welcome Nancy and Stephen, and be prepared for another fantastic year!
—Wendy Schackwitz, President
napa-solano-birds@outlook.com

Education Program Reaches 775 Kids

By Alex Greene

School is back in session, and Napa-Solano Audubon Society is looking forward to another year of bird education. As we continue to improve our programs and reach new audiences, it's helpful to look back at some of the highlights of the previous school year. Grants, hard-working volunteers, and wonderful community

partners helped us bring bird education to 775 local students!

Jr Audubon walks offered an intimate birding opportunity to our fast-growing community of birding youth. These free walks took place at more than 15 locations throughout Napa and Solano Counties.

Many students from Jr Audubon also participated in the Napa Creek Bird Monitors, an ongoing study of a restored section of Napa Creek in downtown Napa. The students collected and analyzed data, and then presented their findings about bird diversity at the Earth Day Creek Cleanup in April.

This coming year will be the best yet for bird education. Our fruitful partnerships with local teachers and organizations will help us continue to spread the message of ecological harmony through our schools, parks and community centers!



Alex Greene (middle) with the Napa Creek Monitoring team at Earth Day

Join the Audubon Assembly!

Chapter leaders, members, and friends are invited to join Audubon California on November 4th-6th at Tenaya Lodge in Yosemite National Park for the 2016 Audubon Assembly.

The program will offer multiple interactive presentations and breakout sessions that focus on topics from climate change and building bird-friendly communities, to advocating for policies that save birds. Friday evening includes dinner with a keynote address by ornithologist and author David Sibley, while Sunday's focus is field trips in the Yosemite area.

This will be an exciting opportunity for you to enjoy birding the iconic Sierra and explore conservation opportunities

and practices, while meeting chapter leaders, members, and partners from across the state. Several NSAS Board Members will also be there.

Visit the Audubon California website to see the agenda, register, and reserve lodging at a special rate. If you have any questions, please email the Chapter Network Team at chapternetworkca@audubon.org



Max Henschell

A BIT O' BIOLOGY: BIRDS AND FIRE

❑ One Clark's Nutcracker can cache up to 100,000 seeds for one winter. In return, the birds help regenerate forests in burned areas: lost caches grow into new trees, often in clusters where the seeds had been hidden together.

❑ A Florida study tracked a burned area over 20 years, and found that while the regenerated habitat had more bare ground and fewer trees than the non-burned area, it also contained twice as many breeding bird species. While fires leave a mark for a long time, they can also represent important habitat.

❑ Black-backed Woodpeckers prefer burned areas, but scientists don't know how they find the burns so quickly. Within a month after crews in Washington state intentionally burned 200 acres of forest, dozens of Black-backed Woodpeckers already had made themselves at home.

Calendar of Events

PROGRAMS

Programs will be held at the Florence Douglas Senior Center, 333 Amador Street, Vallejo, on the second Tuesday of each month at 7pm (unless noted).

Birds of Guyana Tuesday, Sep 13, 7pm

The country of Guyana is located on the northeast shoulder of South America. The diversity of habitats within Guyana supports over 800 species of birds from 72 different families, including Blood-colored Woodpecker, Guiana Cock-of-the-Rock, Toco Toucan, Green Aracari, Crimson Fruit Crow, Caica Parrot, Red-shouldered Macaw, Crimson-hooded Manakin and Finsch's Euphonia. Due to its history and location, much of Guyana remains in a pristine natural state that is comprised of coastal waters, mangroves, marshes, savannas and mountains with the remaining 80% in tropical rainforest.

Join native New Zealander and photographer Ken Wilson of Talon Tours for an exploration of this largely unbirded country.

Coffee Farms and Bird Conservation Tuesday, Oct 11, 7pm

John Sterling will be presenting some of his Smithsonian research supporting the Bird-Friendly Coffee movement. He will discuss why some coffee farms are better than others for birds, why good coffee farms are critical for conservation, and will illustrate his talk with photos of birds from coffee farms in Latin America, the Philippines and Sumatra.



John Sterling

Plumbeous Kite frequently nests in shade coffee plantations in Latin America

John has been a wildlife biologist since 1981. He has traveled internationally as a guide and

ornithologist for many institutions including projects as a Smithsonian ornithologist to Mexico, Ecuador, Peru, Sumatra, the Philippines, Canada and Russia.

Birds of Belize and Tikal, Guatemala Tuesday, Nov 8, 7pm

Known for its biodiversity, Belize is a birder's paradise with over 600 species, including 40 species of raptors. Belize is a part of the Yucatan Peninsula and is on the migration path for some of our spring and summer species. Lying on the Caribbean Sea, it is bordered by Mexico to the north and Guatemala to the west.



Rich Cimino

Mangrove Warbler

In this presentation, Rich Cimino of Yellowbilled Tours will show us the variety of birds and habitats found in Belize's majestic tropical rainforests, fertile farmlands, fresh water marshes and swamps, and pine-cashew tree savannah regions. Tikal, the ruins of an ancient Guatemalan city, provides us with many more tropical species.

Rich Cimino has been leading annual field trips to Belize and Guatemala for over 15 years. He is from Marin County and is active in the Altamont Pass Wind Turbine repowering program and other conservation initiatives.

BIRDING WALKS

Andrew Ford leads half-day bird walks most Saturday mornings at various locations in Napa and Solano counties. Schedule is dependent on leader availability.

Details for these walks are emailed Wednesday before the walk. Sign up for the email announcements on our website.

Il Fiorello Walk Among the Olive Groves Sunday, Sep 25, 7am

Join us for a special sunrise bird walk with light refreshments at the olive

grove at Il Fiorello Olive Oil Company.

Il Fiorello is located in Suisun Valley west of Fairfield. There is a \$7 charge for the walk which includes Il Fiorello's famous Cinderella Pumpkin Citrus Muffins, coffee service, and infused water served in the shady portico after the walk.

We will walk the perimeter of the property, through the groves, and along the irrigation canal for approximately two hours. Over fifty species of birds have been seen on the property, including Golden Eagles and many other species of raptors, water birds, passerines, and owls.

Please note: This is a working farm and commercial food facility. The terrain is uneven and may have animal holes. Due to commercial food licensing requirements, no outside food may be brought into the property.

Space is limited to 15 participants and reservations are required. Contact Jane Hicks at hixholtz@earthlink.net or (707) 553-8901 by Saturday, Sep 17 to reserve your space.



BEGINNING BIRDING

Walks and workshops aimed at Beginning Birders are held twice a month on Saturdays. All workshops begin at 9am, followed by bird walks from 9:30am until noon. Contact Wendy Schackwitz at napa-solano-birds@outlook.com for more information.

Wetlands

Saturday, Sep 3, Am. Canyon Wetlands
Saturday, Sep 17, Rush Ranch

What are the elements that create a wildlife habitat? We will explore the five different habitats that the wetlands provide, and explore how each one supports different birds.

Nest Boxes

Saturday, Oct 1, Newell Canyon Preserve
Saturday, Oct 15, Rush Ranch

Learn about birds that use cavities for nesting and how best to set up your own. On Oct 1, we will also be installing some nest boxes with your help! After the workshop, we will bird the trails and look for old nest holes.

Migration

Saturday, Nov 5, Am. Canyon Wetlands
Saturday, Nov 19, Rush Ranch

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.

JUNIOR AUDUBON

NSAS continues its kid-friendly birding group, Junior Audubon, for teens, pre-teens and any parents who want to attend. Leaders from Audubon will provide binoculars and field guides. See the "Calendar at a Glance" for dates. For more information, contact Alex Greene at: accidentalshrike@gmail.com

FIELD TRIPS

Note: Field trips require RSVPs. See our web site for additional logistics and carpool information.

King Ridge Road

Saturday, Sep 17, 8am
Leader: Ken Wilson, Talon Tours

On our first field trip of the fall, Ken Wilson will take us birding along the Russian River on Freezeout Canyon Road before carpooling up to King Ridge Road (six cars maximum). We will be looking for eagles, woodpeckers (possibly Pileated), migrating warblers and vireos, plus sparrows and flycatchers in the higher elevations. It may be possible to hear Sooty Grouse and Mountain Quail.

This trip is limited to 15 people. RSVP by Sep 11 to Wendy Cole at (707) 963-2331 or beehaven2@comcast.net

Clear Lake State Park

Saturday, Oct 15, 9am to 3pm
Leaders: Brad Barnwell and Darlene Hecomovich, Lake County CBC Compilers

Clear Lake is home to more than 300 species of birds. If the lake is low enough, we may find shore birds, as well as a possible rail, Sora, peeps, pipit and a warbler or two. Hopefully, we will see White-throated Sparrow, white pelicans, Common Mergansers, Wood Duck, herons and egrets. We should also expect typical riparian and oak woodland species including creepers, Wrentits, all of the local woodpeckers, and maybe a few warblers.

There is an \$8/vehicle entry fee to the park; exact change needed. This trip is limited to 15 participants. RSVP by Oct 1 to Wendy Cole at (707) 963-2331 or beehaven2@comcast.net

Humboldt Bay

Sat, Nov 12, 7:30am – Sun, Nov 13
Leader: Rob Fowler, Fowlerope Birding Tours

Join us for a fall birding field trip to the Humboldt Bay area. On Saturday, we'll spend a full day birding along the coastal slope of the Humboldt Bay region exploring the diversity of habitats: bottomland pastures, coastal riparian, rocky shoreline, the Humboldt Bay estuary, coastal spruce and Douglas Fir Forest, and second-growth redwood forest in Arcata.

We'll end the day late-afternoon east of Blue Lake looking for Ruffed Grouse, Rock Sandpiper, Gray Jay and Black-capped Chickadee. Expect a good number of shorebirds in Humboldt Bay, various species of waterfowl, rocky coast shorebirds, gulls and other various passerine species.

Sunday birding will be decided among the group depending on where we went on Saturday.

The fee for this trip is \$15 per person. Space is limited to 12 participants. RSVP by November 4 to Bruce Thomsen at brucecthomsen@yahoo.com or home

FALL CALENDAR AT A GLANCE



Sat Sep 3	Beginning Bird Walk
Sat Sep 10	Jr Audubon Walk
Sun Sep 11	Optics & Nature Fair
Tue Sep 13	Program
Thu Sep 15	Lauguna de Santa Rosa Fundraiser, Sebastopol
Sep 15-18	Visions of the Wild
Sat Sep 17	Russian River Field Trip
Sat Sep 17	Beginning Bird Walk
Sat Sep 17	Coastal Cleanup Day
Sun Sep 25	Walk at Il Fiorello
Sat Oct 1	Beginning Bird Walk
Sat Oct 8	Jr Audubon Walk
Sun Oct 9	Solano Land Trust Sunday Supper
Tue Oct 11	Program
Sat Oct 15	Beginning Bird Walk
Sat Oct 15	Clear Lake Field Trip
Nov 4-6	Audubon Assembly
Sat Nov 5	Beginning Bird Walk
Tue Nov 8	Program
Sat Nov 12	Jr Audubon Walk
Nov 12-13	Humboldt Bay Field Trip
Nov 17-20	Central Valley Bird Symposium
Nov 19	Beginning Bird Walk

Go to www.napasolanoaudubon.com for more info or to join our email list.



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phone: (707) 224-1906 or cell phone: (209) 728-4631. If responding by email, please include your home and cell phone numbers.

Get Wild in the City!

The third annual Visions of the Wild festival, with its newest theme, "Wild in the City," will take place from September 15 through September 18. The festival is a celebration of the plants and animals that live in our urban and suburban settings. Events will include

film screenings, field trips, art exhibits, guest speakers and cruises, all taking place in Vallejo and American Canyon, and most events are free!

Stop by the American Canyon Farmer's Market on September 18, and meet NSAS volunteers at the Nature

Discovery Zone! For more information on the festival or details about the events, go to visionsofthewild.org.



Bird Recovery Programs on the Rise

Solano Land Trust sees 50% increase in fledglings

NSAS volunteers helped to monitor birds in several areas throughout our regions this summer.

Solano Land Trust celebrated the third year of their bluebird nest box trail with strong results. Monitors tracked more than 160 baby birds to successful fledging, a 50% increase over 2015.

The totals included 78 Western Bluebirds, and the first successful nest at Rush Ranch Preserve in Suisun. Totals also included 63 Tree Swallows, more than double the count from last year, as well as a few chickadees, titmice, and Ash-throated Flycatchers.

As an endangered species, the Tricolored Blackbird gets special attention. Last year, Rush Ranch restored native plants to a pond known

to support Tricolored Blackbirds. To document the impact the restoration had, NSAS volunteers visited weekly from April through June, counting the birds and recording the behaviors seen. The colony was extremely successful, nesting twice, with a high count of over 1,000 birds! Our newest Citizen Science project is



Michael Stewart

Bird Seasons. Volunteers spend 30 minutes each week observing seven species, documenting behaviors such as nest building and migration to see if the timing of these activities is changing due to climate change.

For more information about the programs, or if you are interested in participating, contact Wendy Schackwitz at napa-solano-birds@outlook.com

NSAS SUPPORTS MEASURE Z

Napa County voters will decide in November whether to raise the sales tax by ¼ cent for watershed and open space protection in the county.

Funds raised by Measure Z will be used primarily to preserve important open spaces such as drinking water sources, natural areas, and critical habitats for wildlife.

The funds will also be used to restore and maintain existing trails and parks, as well as to create opportunities for youth education.

As birders, these areas are our playgrounds and classrooms. NSAS endorses this measure, and encourages you to vote Yes.



Members' Corner

This past May, NSAS organized an amazing nine-day birding field trip to Arizona for the first eight lucky members to sign up. They enjoyed a memorable adventure from Mt. Lemmon in Tucson, through numerous canyons, to the Southwestern Research Station near New Mexico. The group observed over 160 different species and recorded dozens of "life birds."

Ken Skolnik was one of the few willing to climb up the steep, two-mile Ramsey Canyon trail and was rewarded with a nesting pair of Tufted Flycatchers, who were fly-catching in a beautiful forest setting! This is a "Code 5" bird rarely seen in North America, and Ken says it was totally worth the trek!

Share your story or photo about birds by emailing it to napa-solano-birds@outlook.com



Ken Skolnik



Support Napa-Solano Audubon!

In 2015, NSAS significantly expanded our education and citizen science programs, and 2016 has been even busier. We held our first Bird-a-Thon as part of our CHIRP! Festival, reached 775 students during the school year, and awarded \$4,000 in scholarships (our first in several years). Recently, we have increased our efforts in activism by appointing a Conservation Chair to our board, and participating in Audubon California's Advocacy Day in Sacramento. To continue expanding, we need your support! Consider becoming a Chapter Member, buying our *Breeding Birds of Solano County* book, or donating today.

\$25 Individual Membership \$35 Family Membership \$65 *Breeding Birds of Solano County* \$_____ Donation
Membership \$_____ + Donatation \$_____ + ___ Copies of *Breeding Birds of Solano County* \$_____ = Total Enclosed \$_____

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Send this information and make all checks payable to: Napa-Solano Audubon Society, PO Box 10006, Napa, CA 94581
To join or donate online, go to goo.gl/2oj2uw

INSIDE:
Fires fueled by climate change



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NSAS Awards Two College Scholarships

Recipients focusing on careers helping the environment

Thanks to generous memorial donations from members who wanted to support education, NSAS awarded two \$2,000 scholarships to students in Napa and Solano Counties this summer.

The scholarships were given to graduating seniors from high schools in Napa and Solano County who will attend a college or university this fall, and who have demonstrated a clear interest in pursuing a career related to environmental studies or conservation.

Applicants had to write an essay describing their interest in nature, the environment or conservation and its relationship to their future career goals. They were also asked to provide a résumé of related work, volunteer activities, and completed school work.

There were many worthy applicants, but the two that were chosen were especially outstanding.

The Napa County scholarship recipient, Gianna Gammello from St. Helena High School, is studying Environmental Studies at UC Davis in the fall. Gianna said she is “excited to be majoring in Environmental Studies and Management so that I can follow my greatest passion and benefit the precious natural world.”

Our Solano County recipient, Enid Partika from Benicia



Gianna Gammello



Enid Partika

High School, will enroll as an Environmental Engineering major at UC San Diego. Enid said, “As I step into my life as a young adult, I feel that I will be ready to take on the challenge of developing a sustainable society, and I believe that a career in Environmental Engineering can truly make a difference.”

Congratulations, Gianna and Enid!

We plan to make this an annual award, and the details of our next scholarships will be announced on our web site later this year.