



SONG SPARROW

Spring 2016, Vol. 43 No. 1
napasolanoaudubon.com

Spring Migration Underway

But human impact makes a hard journey even harder.

One day in late March, the last Sandhill Cranes will depart from the Central Valley for their summer homes in Canada or Alaska. Rufous Hummingbirds will travel through California, sipping nectar from spring flowers for fuel, while Swainson's Hawks, having departed their winter grounds in Argentina only a month prior, will arrive to patrol the grasslands and choose tall trees in which to build their nests.

This pattern of migration has continued for thousands of years. But, why do birds do this?

Migration is a strategy driven primarily by the availability of food. As days lengthen in the north, insect populations explode and flowers burst into bloom, creating an enormous abundance of food over a wide area. Birds that migrate can more easily find an appropriate nesting location with ample resources than if they stayed in their winter grounds and competed with the resident birds there.

Additionally, summer days are longer further from the equator, which gives parents more time to find food, so they can support more chicks.

As birds travel, they take the paths that require least effort and have the most convenient sources of food, and they return to these "flyways" each year. The Pacific Flyway runs from Alaska to Patagonia, with the two main routes through California being along the Pacific Coast and through the Central Valley, with the Sacramento River

Delta being a key transition point.

For the more than 50% of North American breeding birds that migrate, they face substantial and increasing risks in such a lengthy journey.

Traditionally, birds have only had to worry about natural hazards, such as wild predators, weather, and exhaustion.

Now, they must also contend with development of land, which can eliminate key stop-over spots and native plants upon which they depend for food. This may also expose birds to pesticides or predation by cats.

Buildings also pose threats, as birds are attracted by lights and then killed when they collide with the structure. Experts estimate that up to 1 billion birds are killed annually by collisions with buildings across North America.

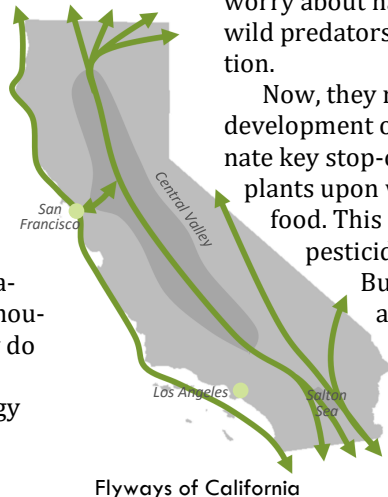
And, as the climate changes, plants will flower and insects hatch at times that are out of sync with migration, impacting the food supply.

With all these challenges, consider ways that you can lend a helping hand.

Turn off lights at night at home and work, to help prevent bird collisions and save yourself money! Also consider installing a window film to make your windows appear solid.

Build a bird-friendly habitat in your yard by providing food, fresh water, and shelter. Choose native plants for your landscaping.

And, keep your cats indoors. This protects some of the 1-3 billion birds estimated killed each year in the US by cats, and will help your pets live healthier and longer!



Flyways of California

Vote for Clean and Healthy Bay

Measure AA on the June 7 ballot will restore bird habitat, clean water and ensure flood protection.

The measure proposes a \$12 per year parcel tax that would raise \$500 million over 20 years to fund critical conservation and flood protection projects, including the restoration of 15,000 acres of wetlands and creation of 25 miles of new Bay Trails.

"Restored wetlands and cleaner water will support shorebirds and waterfowl that use the bay, which is one of the anchors of the Pacific Flyway," said Brigid McCormack, executive director of Audubon California.

It will appear on the ballot in nine Bay Area counties, including Napa and Solano, on June 7.

Save the Bay and the Bay Area Council – along with Audubon California – are part of a broad coalition of environmental and business groups supporting Measure AA. Napa-Solano Audubon also supports the measure.

More than a million shorebirds and waterfowl use San Francisco Bay habitat at the height of migration, and the area includes twelve spots designated as Important Bird Areas due to the high number of rare and endangered bird species as well as the sheer number of birds supported by the bay and surrounding wetlands.

—from Audubon California

INSIDE

Spring Festival Announcement!
Get involved with pelicans and egrets
New monuments protect birds

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

As you can see by this issue of the Song Sparrow, we are busy! busy! helping out our Feathered Friends!

While previous issues have featured our education efforts, this one is featuring our conservation efforts. These include monitoring populations of birds like Brown Pelican, herons, and bluebirds so population health and nesting success can be assessed, as well as supporting local legislation like measure AA, which will raise much needed funds for restoring wetlands around the Bay Area.

How can you help?

- Volunteer to monitor birds! Currently we need volunteers for both the Brown Pelican and the Heron projects.
- Make your yard a haven for nesting birds by building and installing a nest box! See page 6 for links to plans and installation guidelines.
- Support us financially through a donation or by participating in one of our many fun upcoming fund-raising events. See page 3 for a list of these events.

However you choose to support us, we humbly thank you!

—Wendy Schackwitz, President
napa-solano-birds@outlook.com

GIVE LOCAL AMERICA!

Give Local Solano is a 24-hour, online giving event organized by Solano Community Foundation to help grow philanthropy in Solano County and surrounding areas.

On May 3, Solano Community Foundation, along with Napa-Solano Audubon and 25 other local non-profits, will participate in this online day of giving. Every gift you make this day will help your favorite charities, and we hope we're one of them!

You do not have to live in Solano County to donate, but the participating non-profits are located in or provide services to Solano County. Go to the website www.givelocalsolano.org for more info.

Egrets Take the Pulse of the Bay

Slowly and stealthily, the Great Egret creeps through the pond, freezes, and then strikes like lightning. Her prey, an unfortunate frog, didn't stand a chance, and she returns to deliver the prize to the gaping mouths in her nest.

This scene repeats many times a day, as herons, egrets, and other large waders hunt. At the top of their food chain, these birds depend on good habitat quality and a wide variety of organisms for food, including fish, frogs, snakes, crayfish, and even small mammals. During the nesting season, daily needs increase as they forage to nourish themselves and provision their chicks. Changes in the condition of bay area wetlands are reflected in the size of the heron and egret nesting population and in the number of chicks fledged.

Audubon Canyon Ranch, with the help of many volunteers including several from the Napa-Solano Audubon Society, has been monitoring

heronries in the north bay and tracking the number of chicks raised since 1991. In a recent report, heron and egret brood size was found to be relatively stable across the region, but some trends suggest a very gradual, long-term decline in wetland quality.

This study depends on many years of consistent monitoring, so please consider volunteering! The 2016 season begins in March. Volunteers visit a nesting site every 3-4 weeks to count nests and hatchlings. You must be able to identify the large egrets and herons, and new volunteers can be paired with a mentor for training.

For more information go to <https://sites.google.com/site/northbayhep/home>



Len Blumin

COUNT BROWN PELICANS ON MAY 7

In 2016, Audubon California, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state wildlife agencies, and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird are collaborating to initiate a biannual survey of the California Brown Pelican subspecies (*Pelecanus occidentalis californicus*).

This iconic bird was removed from the Endangered Species List in 2009 after decades of successful conservation efforts. In recent years, however, this subspecies has experienced poor breeding success and unusual mortality events raising questions about its conservation status. It is more

critical than ever to track the distribution, abundance, and population structure of Brown Pelicans as their ocean and coastal environment changes.

So, please join us from 5pm-7pm on May 7 to help count and photograph pelicans at key roost sites along the coast from San Francisco



JeanHall/Audubon Photography Awards

to Bodega Bay.

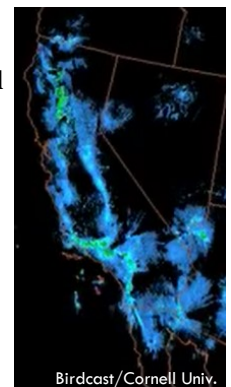
For more information, see <http://ca.audubon.org/news/audubon-network-helping-pacific-brown-pelicans>. If you would like to sign up as a volunteer, please email Ariana Rickard (arickard@audubon.org).

A BIT O' BIOLOGY: MIGRATION

☐ Birds migrate in such large numbers that they can be detected by weather radar! The image on the right is a radar image of California and Nevada, taken after sunset in May. The light areas are massive groups of migrating birds.

☐ Many songbirds migrate at night and feed during the day. They find their way in the dark by watching the rotation of stars and sensing wind patterns as well as the Earth's magnetic field.

☐ Birds fly in "V" patterns because the flow of air off the wingtips of the bird in front produces uplift that reduces energy cost to the bird behind by at least 50%.



Birdcast/Cornell Univ.

Napa-Solano Audubon Presents...

CHIRP!

2016

A FESTIVAL FOR THE BIRDS



JOIN US IN APRIL FOR A MONTH OF FUN ACTIVITIES TO CELEBRATE SPRING AND RAISE MONEY FOR NAPA-SOLANO AUDUBON!

ALL PROCEEDS GO TOWARD NAPA-SOLANO AUDUBON SOCIETY'S EDUCATION AND CONSERVATION EFFORTS, INCLUDING JUNIOR AUDUBON, IN-CLASSROOM TEACHING, HABITAT AND NEST MONITORING, AND MORE!

FOR TIMES, LOCATIONS, TICKETS, OR REGISTRATION, GO TO NAPASOLANOAUDUBON.COM

APRIL 1-24
BIRD-A-THON!

APRIL 9
WARBLER ID WORKSHOP!
BY TOM STEPHENSON, CO-AUTHOR OF *THE WARBLER GUIDE*

APRIL 12
SPECIAL SHOWING OF THE MOVIE **THE MESSENGER**

APRIL 16
GALA EVENT!
WITH DINNER, SILENT AUCTION AND SHOWING OF THE MOVIE **PELICAN DREAMS**, WITH A SPECIAL Q&A BY DIRECTOR JUDY IRVING!

APRIL 23-24
EARTH DAY FESTIVAL!
WETLANDS CLEAN-UP, NATIVE PLANTS INSTALLATION, WORKSHOPS ON BEGINNING BIRDING AND GARDENING WITH NATIVE PLANTS, AND KID'S ACTIVITIES!

APRIL 24
BIRDATHON RESULTS PICNIC!

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).

The Great Gray Owls of California and the Pacific Northwest
Tuesday, March 8, 7pm

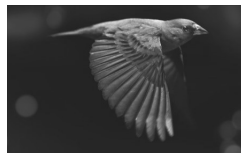
The tallest owl in North America, the Great Gray remains elusive, mysterious and a highly-prized sighting among birders. The Great Gray is on California's endangered species list and individuals found in the Sierra are the world's southernmost in their species. Harry Fuller will discuss this bird's range and life cycle, and explore challenges it faces with climate change.



Harry Fuller is on the Board of Directors of the Klamath Bird Observatory and co-founder of Ashland, Oregon's Mountain Bird Festival featuring the area's nesting Great Gray Owls.

The Messenger: Documentary film about Songbirds
Tuesday, April 12, 7pm

For April's program, we will screen the film, *The Messenger*, exploring our deep-seated connection to birds and how the uncertain fate of songbirds might mirror our own. From the northern reaches of the Boreal Forest to the base of Mount Ararat in Turkey to the streets of New York, *The Messenger* brings us face-to-face with a remarkable variety of human-made perils that have devastated thrushes, warblers, orioles, tanagers, grosbeaks and many other airborne music-makers.



Su Rynard's visually stunning documentary is the artful story about the mass depletion of songbirds on multiple continents, and about those who are working to turn the tide.

Because it migrates from the Arctic to the Antarctic, the Arctic Tern sees more hours of daylight than any other creature.

Board of Directors Election, Volunteer Party, and Birds of Patagonia
Tuesday, May 10, 7pm

We'll end our spring programs celebrating our extraordinary volunteers with munchies, desserts, wine, and beer. We will also elect our Board of Directors for the upcoming year. Then John Glover will regale us with stories and photos highlighting the stunning landscapes and diversity of wildlife in Patagonia, including many penguin species.

Dr. John Glover is on the Board of Directors of the Napa-Solano Audubon and is on the faculty at Touro University. He has been an avid birder and naturalist most of his life.

JUNIOR AUDUBON

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

BIRDING WALKS

Tuesdays only

NSAS offers bird walks every Tuesday morning at various locations in Napa and Solano Counties. Details for these walks are emailed two days before the walk. Sign up for the email announcements on our website! **NOTE: Friday walks are no longer offered!**

BEGINNING BIRDING

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

Basic Bird Identification

Sat, Mar 5, 9am, Am. Cyn. Wetlands
Sat, Mar 19, 9am, Rush Ranch

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!

Bird Songs

Sat, Apr 2, 9am, Newell Cyn. Preserve
Sat, Apr 16, 9am, Rush Ranch

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.

Nesting

Sat, May 7, 9am, Am. Cyn. Wetlands
Sat, May 21, 9am, Rush Ranch

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.

Adaptations - Feathers

Sat, June 4, 9am, Newell Cyn. Preserve
Sat, June 18, 9am, Rush Ranch

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 air-

plane. During this workshop we will explore a little of this history, as well as discuss all of the functions a feather has for birds.

Adaptations - Feet

Sat, July 2, 9am, Am. Cyn. Wetlands
Sat, July 16, 9am, Rush Ranch

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.

Adaptations - Beaks

Sat, Aug 6, 9am, Newell Cyn. Preserve
Sat, Aug 20, 9am, Rush Ranch

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.

FIELD TRIPS

Note: Field trips require RSVPs to the trip coordinator.

San Mateo Coast & Pescadero Marsh
Saturday, Mar 26, 7am
Leader: Nell Lyons, Ranger San Mateo State Parks

Pescadero Marsh, situated on the Pacific Flyway, serves as an important stop-over point for migrant shorebirds, a wintering ground for numerous waterfowl, and a breeding ground for a variety of marsh birds. As the only sizeable marsh on the California coast between San Francisco Bay and Monterey County, it is a rare and valuable resource. A rich and diverse combination of habitats occurs here. From there, depending on recent activity, we will car pool along the San Mateo Coast stopping at such other spots as Pigeon Pt. Lighthouse, and Gazos Creek.

This trip is limited to 15 people. Please make reservations by March 19, with Bruce Thomsen at (707) 224-1906 or cell at (209) 728-4631 or brucecthomsen@yahoo.com.

Mitchell Canyon

Saturday, Apr 23, 8am
Leader: Hugh Harvey, Field Trip Chair, Mt. Diablo Audubon Society

Mitchell Canyon in Mt. Diablo State Park consists of oak savanna, chaparral, and the creek-side environment of

Mitchell Creek. We may see Golden Eagle, California Quail, woodpeckers, five species of flycatchers, vireos, warblers, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Lazuli Bunting, Wrentit, Western Tanager, and Phainopepla. This hike is approximately 3 to 4 miles. Be prepared for hot weather and poison oak along the trail.

There is a \$10/vehicle entry fee to the park. This trip is limited to 15 people. Please make reservations by April 19, with Bruce Thomsen at (707) 224-1906 or cell at (209) 728-4631 or brucecthomsen@yahoo.com.

Seven-Day Field Trip to Southeast Arizona

May 7 – May 14

Leader: Tony Battiste

This trip is limited to 8 people and is currently full.

Napa-Solano Audubon Spring Calendar at a Glance



Walks held every Tuesday.

- | | |
|------------|--------------------------------|
| Sat Mar 5 | Peña Adobe Open House |
| Sat Mar 5 | Beginning Bird Walk |
| Tue Mar 8 | Program |
| Sat Mar 12 | Junior Audubon Walk |
| Sat Mar 19 | Beginning Bird Walk |
| Sat Mar 26 | Field Trip |
| Sat Mar 26 | Junior Audubon Walk |
| Fri Apr 1 | Birdathon Begins |
| Sat Apr 2 | Beginning Bird Walk |
| Sat Apr 9 | Warbler Workshop |
| Sat Apr 9 | Junior Audubon Walk |
| Tue Apr 12 | Program: <i>The Messenger</i> |
| Sat Apr 16 | Dinner & <i>Pelican Dreams</i> |
| Sat Apr 16 | Beginning Bird Walk |
| Sat Apr 23 | Field Trip |
| Sat Apr 23 | Earth Day Clean-up Napa |
| Sat Apr 23 | Earth Day Am. Canyon |
| Sat Apr 30 | Rush Ranch Open House |
| Sat May 7 | Beginning Bird Walk |
| Sat May 7 | Field Trip |
| Sat May 10 | Program |
| Sat May 21 | Beginning Bird Walk |

Go to www.napasolanoaudubon.com for more info or to sign up for email alerts.



Like us on Facebook!
[facebook.com/
NapaSolanoAudubon](https://facebook.com/NapaSolanoAudubon)

New National Monuments Protect Birds

Millions of California birds will be among the beneficiaries of three new national monuments created by executive order in February. At the request of US Senator Dianne Feinstein, President Barack Obama carved out three areas totaling approximately 1.8 million acres for monument status, linking the San Bernardino National Forest to Joshua Tree National Park, and wrapping around the Mojave National Preserve to the Nevada border.

“Some areas are too important to develop, and these areas of the California desert – home to more than 250 species of birds – are among them,” said President and CEO of the National Audubon Society David Yarnold.

Habitats within these new monuments range from coniferous to riverine forest to desert scrub and host a multitude of migratory and breeding birds. Many unique and rare bird species have adapted to survive in this desert ecosystem and can be found nowhere else. Riverine habitats provide nesting grounds

for the rare Least Bell’s Vireo and other songbirds and provide a vital migration corridor to feed and rest during their journeys through this arid landscape from Mexico to points north.



Nicola Delfino/Flickr Creative Commons

Desert specialty species, such as the Elf Owl, are found breeding in unique desert woodlands of the valley floors in the Mojave. Golden Eagles and Prairie Falcons breed in the canyons and cliffs within the mountainous landscapes. Swainson’s Hawks, migrating from South America, use this region as a critical corridor during their annual spring migration. Birders are attracted from around the world to many hotspots

within these monuments to observe rare desert-dwelling birds and witness spectacular spring migrations.

The three new monuments will be the Sand to Snow National Monument, the Mojave Trails National Monument and the Castle Mountain National Monument.

If you’re considering a vacation to see these new areas, you’ll want to go birding along the way! According to eBird, some of the most important birding hotspots near these new monuments include:

- Furnace Creek, Death Valley National Park, 319 species seen
- Zzyzx Desert Studies Center, 232 species seen
- Big Morongo Canyon Preserve, 229 species

Use ebird.com for more information on the birds, and for directions and lodging information, look for these places using Google or Bing.

—some content from Audubon California



Mark Stephenson

Members’ Corner

Mark Stephenson and his son Lucas took a side trip to Flannery and Robinson Roads looking for owls and plovers after the February field trip to Rush Ranch and Grizzly Island. Mark captured this picture of a Burrowing Owl, who appears to be quite grumpy about their presence!

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

Breeding Birds Atlas Available

A limited number of copies of our acclaimed, *Breeding Birds of Solano County* are still available.

This beautiful hard-cover book contains hundreds of amazing color photos of birds from our area, as well as maps and interpretive descriptions.

To order your copy, see our web site or use the form below.



Support Napa-Solano Audubon!

In 2015, NSAS offered more than 50 walks and field trips, hired an Education Coordinator, did classroom visits and programs for kids that reached 400+ students, set up two new Bluebird Box Trails and monitored 40+ boxes, participated in several restoration projects, and more! In 2016, we want to continue growing and have even more impact on our local communities and birds! For us to accomplish all this, however, we need your support. Consider becoming a Chapter Member, buying our new book, or donating today.

\$25 Individual Membership \$35 Family Membership \$65 *Breeding Birds of Solano County*

Membership \$_____ + Donatation \$_____ + _____ Copies of *Breeding Birds of Solano County* \$_____ = Total Enclosed \$_____

Name _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Address _____ City State & Zip _____

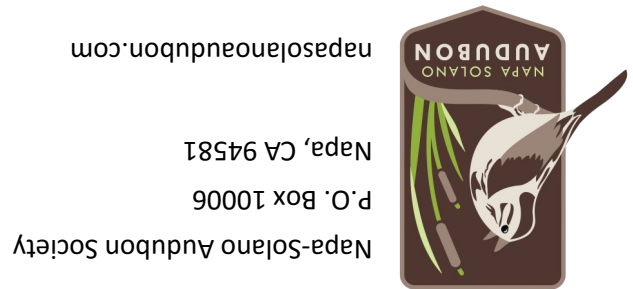
Send this information and make all checks payable to: Napa-Solano Audubon Society, PO Box 10006, Napa, CA 94581

To join or donate online, go to goo.gl/2oj2uw

CHIRP

IS COMING SOON! SEE INSIDE!

911074



Spring is Nesting Season!

Make a difference by installing and caring for nest boxes

As natural habitats are developed, for human use, birds lose suitable locations for nesting. But, you can help them by providing nest boxes.

Nestwatch from Cornell University (nestwatch.org) offers downloadable building plans and tips for installing boxes, as well as an opportunity for citizen scientists to report the success of nests in their boxes or in the wild.

Boxes should be placed during March. The dimensions and opening should be sized to the bird you hope to attract, and the box should be placed in an appropriate habitat. For instance, wrens want small boxes near shrub cover, while kestrels want larger boxes adjacent to grasslands.

Attributes of a good nest box that Nestwatch recommends include:

Appropriate box dimensions, entrance, and height

See examples on the right for how nests vary for two local birds

Helps regulate temperature

Walls at least 3/4" thick and two ventilation holes on each side

Helps fledglings leave

Rough interior walls and interior grooves

Easy to maintain

Hinged door with sturdy closing mechanism

Solidly constructed

Untreated wood and galvanized screws to help withstand weather while not exposing birds to chemicals

Keeps birds dry

A solid roof, recessed floor, and drainage holes

Keeps out predators

No exterior perches and a guard, such as a collar, on the pole

Easy to install

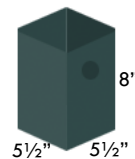
Extended back for easy attachment to poles



OAK TITMOUSE

Titmice nest from mid-March through June, and prefer open woodlands.

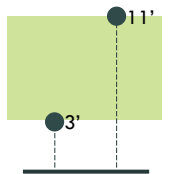
Box dimensions



Entrance



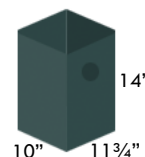
Mounting height



AMERICAN KESTREL

Kestrels nest from late March until August and prefer open woodlands or grasslands.

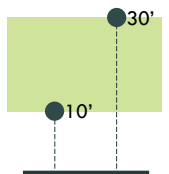
Box dimensions



Entrance



Mounting height



For more information, see <http://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/features-of-a-good-birdhouse>