

photo | geocaching.org



the SONG SPARROW

WINTER 2017, Vol.45 No.2

WINTER 2017 CALENDAR AT A GLANCE



- Sun, Dec 17 **Field Trip**
- Mon, Dec 18 **Benicia CBC**
- Mon, Jan 1 **Angwin CBC**
- Sat, Jan 6 **Beginning Bird Walk**
- Tues, Jan 9 **Program**
- Wed, Jan 10 **Junior Audubon**
- Sat, Jan 20 **Beginning Bird Walk**
- Wed, Jan 24 **Junior Audubon**
- Sat, Jan 27 **Field Trip**
- Sat, Jan 27 **Richardson Bay Waterbird Fest**
- Sat, Feb 3 **Beginning Bird Walk**
- Wed, Feb 7 **Junior Audubon**
- Tues, Feb 13 **Program**
- Sat, Feb 17 **Beginning Bird Walk**
- Wed, Feb 21 **Junior Audubon**
- Sat, Feb 24 **Field Trip**

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

President's Corner

In pondering what to write in this newsletter, I keep coming back to all the changes that have affected so many people because of the fires. With the loss of loved ones, pets and property, how do you cope with the holidays? Each person will find their individual way and may discover a new experience.

This makes me think of when I moved to Dallas, TX a number of years ago. I had always lived in the Bay Area, close to friends and family, so this was an entirely new adventure for me. My partner John and I knew no one, and though we had made friends through work, they had their own traditions. So we were on our own for all holidays and celebrations.

Since I like to cook I was able to experiment with the traditional way of preparing a holiday dinner. Oh yes, we had turkey and all the trimmings but I tried recipes that my family would have revolted over. One year I did Cajun, another was a Tamarind glazed turkey with chorizo stuffing. These were great experiments as John will eat most everything, but some were not worth repeating since I am a little pickier. Another benefit was since we didn't have a big production, we would go birding while the turkey cooked.

We lived near the South Fork of the Trinity River; just five minutes away. There is a wonderful trail that runs for five miles along the bank. There is also an equestrian center that offered fabulous birding opportunities. There was hardly a soul around, and the birds were plentiful! Walking through the fall leaves in the quiet and cool air was a special treat. After a couple of hours it was back to apartment to tend to the small but delicious feast. We missed our family and friends but found a new and satisfying tradition.

So maybe this is the time to discover something new. Embrace your inner birder, find a great restaurant or share a meal with new friends.

Sally Baumer, President

Meet Our New Education Coordinator!



Crystal DeMarco has joined Napa-Solano Audubon as our new Education Coordinator, and we are fortunate to have found her. Crystal has a degree in Environmental Studies with over nine years of related experience working for California State Parks, Balboa Park in San Diego, and as an assistant teacher in Sonoma. Before Crystal joined us, she led environmental education programs at the State Parks, Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve, and later managed twelve botanical gardens in San Diego's Balboa Park, including the rose garden, butterfly garden, park nursery, and 320 acres of landscaping around the park.

In the short time she has been our Education Coordinator, Crystal has presented to over 225 students at nine elementary classrooms in Napa and American Canyon. She has led our beginning bird walks twice a month and is helping to organize the Christmas Bird Count 4 Kids in December. She will also be starting up our Junior Audubon program again in January.

Our Education Chair, Eric McKee, says that Crystal is a huge part of the Napa-Solano Audubon's operations. "Already this year Crystal has provided leadership training to 10 high school youths involved in the Napa Youth Stewardship Council. These teens went on to lead Western bluebird education activities with 1,000 youths at Connolly Ranch Harvest Festival. The teen leaders painted faces with colorful birds, and helped install several bluebird nesting boxes on the farm. Crystal will continue to work with high school teens throughout the year, engaging students in bird watching and monitoring, bluebird and barn owl box installations, leadership training, and career mentorship."

Crystal's goal going forward is to share her love of birds with others and open more children's eyes to the world of birds and wildlife. Crystal lives in Sonoma with her husband and son. If you see her at one of our events or on a beginning bird walk, please welcome her to our chapter.

NEST BOX PROJECT Continued Success

Wendy Schackwitz, Citizen Science Chair

Our nest box monitoring for the 2017 season was a huge success. Over 30 volunteers monitored 149 of boxes spread across both Napa and Solano Counties. Special thanks go out to Jeff Bonneville - Napa County Coordinator and Earl Swenerton, Solano Land Trust - Solano County Coordinator.

In Napa County, 65 of boxes were monitored at eight different sites, resulting in a total of 66 Western Bluebirds and 54 Tree Swallows fledging. Trail monitors that made it happen included Holly, Anita, and Alan Jessop, Pat Hildreth, Deborah Villa Dash, Laurie Puzo, Allison Nagel and the Girl Scouts, American Canyon High Students, and New Tech High School students.

Many of our volunteers also participated in Solano Land Trust's Nest Box monitoring in Solano County. In this program, 84 of the boxes were monitored, resulting in a total of 111 Western Bluebirds and 122 Tree Swallows fledging. Thanks go out to Betty Mosher, Carilyn Stewart, Linda Sonner, Carol Boykin, Cathy & Richard Christo, Evan Bremer, James Dirks, Jeff Bonneville, John & Mirtha Kaufman, Linda Stewart, Peggy Fong, Scott Campbell-Walker, Sue Wickham, Tony & Laurie Saraiva, and Vicki Dawson.



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.

No Program in December because our volunteers will be busy with Christmas Bird Counts.

Birds of Paraguay Tuesday, January 9, 7 pm

From the dry Chaco in the west to the Atlantic rainforests of the east, Paraguay will soon be on the map for international birders. John Sterling was the team leader that developed a curriculum for training birding guides in Paraguay for the National Audubon Society and the Inter-American Development Bank. He was able to bird with several of the graduates of the Advanced Training Course. John will talk about the new opportunities for birding ecotourism and will illustrate his talk with some of his photos taken on this trip.

John Sterling is a wildlife biologist and consultant whose clients include The Nature Conservancy, National Audubon Society, Center for Natural Lands Management, CA Dept of Water Resources, Kern Water Bank and the Smithsonian Institution. He was a former staff avian ecologist at the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. John has been a diehard birder since 1971 and loves teaching his identification workshops and leading his international tours.

Tropical and Local Hummingbirds

Tuesday, February 13, 7 pm

Manfred Kusch, a retired professor from UC Davis, has lived the past 25 years along the south bank of Putah Creek. He has developed part of his property into a private bird preserve and garden that includes a large riparian woodland, which attracts many birds including Calliope, Rufous, and Black-chinned Hummingbirds. The UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine has conducted a health and conservation banding project in his garden for the past seven years.

Kusch will discuss the hummingbird health banding program as well as show photos of both local and tropical hummingbirds viewed throughout his travels in South America.

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 at 9:30am until noon. Contact Crystal DeMarco at crystalrose51996@gmail.com for more information. No Beginning Bird Walks in December due to CBC's.

Hummingbirds

Saturday, Jan 6, 9am
American Canyon Wetlands

Saturday, Jan 20, 9am
Rush Ranch

Learn about how to identify the three hummingbird species found in our area and how hummingbird ranges are changing due to climate

change. This talk will be followed by a bird walk.

Nest Boxes

Saturday, Feb 3, 9am
Newell Canyon Preserve

Saturday, Feb 17, 9am
Lynch Canyon

Learn about the birds that use cavities for nesting and how building and installing nest boxes can provide them with much-needed habitat. This will be followed by a bird walk.

FIELD TRIPS

Note: Most field trips require RSVPs to the trip coordinator. See napasolanoaudubon.com for additional logistics and carpool information.

Benicia CBC Pre-Count Scouting

Sunday, Dec 17, 8:30 am
Leader: Robin Leong

Join Robin Leong to scout several locations in advance of the Benicia Christmas Bird Count. Preview several areas in the 15 mile diameter Benicia Christmas Bird Count (BCBC) circle. We will learn how to estimate the number of species seen, as well as tally as many species as possible. Since this field trip is during the count period, species can be counted as a Count Week species if they are not seen on the December 18th Christmas Bird Count.

We will bird until approximately 2p.m. For more information, contact Robin Leong at: robin_leong@netzero.net.

Bodega Bay

Saturday, Jan 27, 8:30 am

Leader: Ken Wilson

Join Ken Wilson of Talon Tours for a day of birding the Bodega Bay area. We will check out the Rail Ponds, Owl Canyon, Dieckmans Store and Bodega Head, and more. Bring lunch, water, rain gear if foul weather, binoculars, and spotting scope, if you have one.

Please RSVP to Wendy Cole at: **beehaven2@comcast.net** by January 19.

Rush Ranch and Grizzly Island Wildlife Area

Sunday, Feb 24, 8:00 am

Leader: Kurt Niznik

Join Kurt Niznik for a walk around Rush Ranch that will focus on raptors. We will also look for the Burrowing Owls, Great Horned Owls, and Barn Owls that frequent the ranch and then move on to the marsh to find rails, ducks and tricolored blackbirds. We will continue on to Grizzly Island for raptors, ducks, shorebirds, geese, possible bittern, and loggerhead shrike.

This trip is limited to 15 participants. Please RSVP to Wendy Cole at: **beehaven2@comcast.net** by February 17.

JUNIOR AUDUBON

Our Junior Audubon walks for teens and pre-teens are starting up again on select Wednesdays from 2pm to 4pm. Here are the dates and locations for upcoming walks.

Contact Crystal DeMarco at **crystalrose51996@gmail.com** for more information.

Alston Park

January 10

At Main Parking Lot at end of Trower

Trancas Crossing Park

January 24

Kennedy Park

February 7

At Skate Park

Oxbow Preserve Park

February 21

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Join the fun as we conduct our annual Christmas Bird Counts! Every year, thousands of volunteers around the Americas go out during the holidays to survey birds in their areas, with the results being used by scientists to monitor the health of bird populations and guide conservation action. From feeder-watchers and field observers to count compilers

and regional editors, everyone who takes part in the Christmas Bird Count does it knowing that their efforts are making a difference for science and bird conservation. 2017 will be the 118th year that Audubon has conducted counts. Birders of all levels are welcome!

Kids 7-18 and their parents are invited to **Napa County's 4th Annual CBC4Kids** from 9am to 12:30pm on Saturday, Dec 16. Kids learn how to use binoculars, go on a short birding walk and gather to share their findings. Contact Crystal DeMarco for details at: **crystalrose51996@gmail.com** and register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/4th-annual-christmas-bird-count-for-kids-2017-tickets-39632838888>.

The **71st Benicia CBC** is on Monday, Dec 18, followed by a potluck dinner. The Benicia CBC circle includes Benicia, East Vallejo, Cordelia, West Suisun City, and parts of Grizzly Island and Grizzly Bay. Contact Robin Leong at: **robin_leong@netzero.net** for details or to sign up.

The **47th Angwin CBC** is on Monday, Jan 1, and a potluck and catered dinner will follow. The count area includes central Napa Valley, Pope Valley, Lake Hennessey and Lake Berryessa. Contact Murray Berner at: **vireocity@hotmail.com** for details or to sign up.

Your Donation for Birds and Their Habitats

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

Join or Donate Online!

To become a member, donate online, or to order your copy of *Breeding Birds of Solano County*, go to goo.gl/2oj2uw

Conservation Advocacy

Nancy A. Piotrowski, Ph.D., NSAS Conservation Chair



Learn about useful tools to effect change in our government

Science-based advocacy is a useful tool. If you are interested in attending a local advocacy training in December, please email me at napiotrowski@yahoo.com. I will be holding a daytime event in December and making arrangements as needed to do smaller in-house trainings if there is interest. The goal will be learning how to use letter writing and district meetings to effect change.

As an update, state-wide efforts to advocate on behalf of birds and their environment resulted in some wins. Bills passed and signed included Senate Bill (SB) 50 – Federal Lands

Conveyance, SB 51 – Federal Whistle Blower Protections, SB 249 – Off Highway Vehicle Reform, SB 615 – Salton Sea 10-year Plan, and Assembly Bill 109 – Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund investments in wetlands. The SB5 - Parks Bond also passed and will result in a June 2018 ballot measure. We will have more information as we get closer to that date.

Also noteworthy is that SB 49 - Clean Air, Water, Workers Defense Act did not pass. SB49, 50, and 51 were thought of as a “green shield” for California. Essentially, in the event that federal environmental

and protection standards are weakened, this was to be a back-up to protect California. SB49 specifically was written to prohibit a state or local agency from amending or revising its rules to be less stringent than the federal baseline standards pertaining to environmental protection. Given that this did not pass this session, further efforts will be needed to protect the environmental status of our state should the federal standards weaken.

If you have any questions about any of these matters, please be in touch.

Looking for a great holiday gift?

Many of you have a copy of our landmark atlas, *Breeding Birds of Solano County*. This is not only a unique and beautiful gift for the birders in your life, but for the non-birders as well. Much more than just a landmark scientific publication, this is a true work of art--a hardcover book with the finest possible paper, a professional layout and design, and hundreds of high-quality color photos. It is the definitive resource on the nesting birds of Solano County that will be enjoyed by anyone who receives it.

You can order the book online at our website at napasolanoaudubon.com for \$65 including tax and shipping, or by mail using the form on the previous page. We will include a gift card if you want the book shipped directly to the recipient. If you are a chapter member, you can also arrange to pick up the book for \$50 by contacting Diane Ley at leydm@aol.com.



Perfect for your favorite bird lover!



NAPA-SOLANO AUDUBON SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 10006
NAPA, CA 94581
napasolanoudubon.com



Education Coordinator Crystal DeMarco helping kids build a giant nest

VOLUNTEER!

Are you looking for a worthwhile volunteer opportunity where you can learn new skills or give back in a meaningful way? Well, we would love to have you.

We are currently looking for volunteers to fill the following positions:

**Membership Chair
Communications Director
Volunteer Coordinator**

If you are interested in any of these positions or any other NSAS volunteer opportunities, please contact Sally Baumer at sally.birder@sbcglobal.net.