



SONG SPARROW

Spring 2020 Vol. 50 No. 1
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SPRING 2020 CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

- Mar. 01 Sun. Field Trip
- Mar. 15 Sun. Beginning Bird Walk
- Mar. 28 Sat. Field Trip
- Apr. 05 Sun. Beginning Bird Walk
- Apr. 09 Thu. Speaker Program
- Apr. 19 Sun. Field Trip

For additional weekend Bird Walks, please sign up for our Field Trip email list. These can be subject to cancellation, and therefore are not listed here.

For more info, to sign up for email alerts, or to join our chapter, please go to:
<https://napasolanoaudubon.com>



Spring Walks & Activities

Watch your email inbox and our website for more walks and activities.

napasolanoaudubon.com

Volunteers Needed!

Please contact Sally Baumer:
sally.birder@sbcglobal.net
to find out how you can help.

Volunteering is a great way to meet new people & make a difference.



RUFF / ALAN SCHMIERER / WIKICOMMONS

73rd Benicia Christmas Bird Count

Robin Leong, Director at Large

The 73rd Benicia CBC took place on December 16, 2019. The weather really cooperated with clear though cool conditions and little or no wind throughout the 15 mile diameter circle. We had 96 participants which located 172,622 birds (above average) of which there were 169 species (slightly below average). One of the highlights was the Ruff found by Mark Dettling, the 237th species to be found on the Benicia CBC. Another interesting sight was the murmuration of Starlings, estimated to be around 100,000, seen from different locations around Benicia at dusk.

Benicia CBC personal high counts were Cackling Goose 164 vs 73 (highest record for the BCBC), Red-Breasted Merganser 10 vs 8, Spotted Sandpiper 15 vs 11, Marsh Wren 480 vs 462, and Bewick's Wren 45 vs 41. Once again, a huge number of American Robins were concentrated in Green Valley. One of the surprises was Mary Schiedt's and Wally Neville's groups hearing 4 Ridgway's Rails along Goodyear Slough. This area and the huge marsh in our count circle helped to get a slam of rails for BCBC. The grasslands in the Tri-City area provides great habitat for raptors and this year was no exception. Though we did not get a boat to count the birds on Grizzly Bay, I was very pleased that several new counters volunteered to join us this year with access to new areas.

Continued on page 2

President's Corner

Sally Baumer, NSAS President

Well folks, this has been quite a ride being president of Napa-Solano Audubon Society for the past three years. We hired our Education Coordinator (E.C.), Crystal Demarco to replace Alex Greene and the position was expanded. With the help of Eric McKee, got our E.C. program off and running. This was a real learning curve as funding was to come from grants, but we soon learned they are hard to come by. This resulted in having to dip sharply into our reserves to continue the program. After two years, Crystal moved out of the area and we had to make a hard decision whether to continue with an E.C or scrap the program. We chose to do the latter and unfortunately we had to back off from some of our partnerships with other community organizations. This has been difficult but unavoidable.

Another big adjustment was the resignation of our Admin Assistant. With elderly parents to care for, it was just too big of a load. It was decided since we are a volunteer organization, we would not hire another Admin but someone to handle the website and layout of the newsletter instead.

Because the Communication's Chair is still vacant, a lot of the tasks fell on the President, namely me. We also rewrote our By-Laws and are redefining Board positions, a task still being worked on, and hope to have this completed by the end of June.

In a way, without the E.C. the job of president has been simplified in that we are not seeking grant money and having to do big fund raisers. Our community commitments are less and with the help of Holly Jessop, our new Director at Large, who is focusing on Citizen Science, and with the help of Lauri Puzo, we will get our Beginning Bird Walks up and running. Holly is also working on a cohesive program of bird box monitoring.

So once again I urge you to join the wonderful people that serve on our Board. ***We urgently need a President, Vice President and Communication's chair.*** Please come do your part to keep this wonderful organization running. 🐦

Board of Directors

President
Sally Baumer
(707) 745-2362

Secretary
Helena Kassel
(707) 812-4463

Treasurer
David Kassel
(707) 812-4464

Conservation
Nancy Piotrowski
(415) 386-4923

Field Trips
Carol Boykin
(707) 252-6194

Membership
Patti Heidl
(707) 552-4702

Programs
Barbara Navolanic
(707) 745-8454

Director at Large
Robin Leong
(707) 643-1287

Director at Large
Holly Jessop
(510) 224-9822

Director at Large
Mo Mosher
(707) 567-6401

BOARD MEETINGS are open to members. If you wish to attend, please call: (707) 745-2362.

DONATIONS APPRECIATED!

Napa-Solano Audubon Society welcomes gifts of funds, stock, or property, and bequests in general, or in honor or memory of someone. Gifts may be directed to any NSAS project.

Unspecified gifts will go for Education, Conservation or other projects. Since NSAS is an all-volunteer organization, 100% of your donation goes to this chapter. All gifts are tax-deductible.



MARSH WREN / BECKY MATSUBARA

Christmas Bird Count

(Continued from page 1)

I thank the **Napa-Solano Audubon Society's sponsorship** of this event. **Valero Energy Corporation's grant**, and the **donation of pizzas from South Hampton Round Table Pizza**, **hot dishes from NSAS members** that could not participate in counting, and the **donation of wine from counter David Graves of Saintsbury Winery** made our potluck better than ever. Additionally, having **access to private duck clubs, the Solano Land Trust and the Greater Vallejo Recreation District, the Fairfield and Benicia Water Works department's** properties provided unique birding habitats.

However, the real Mahalo go to the 96 counters who took time off in their lives on a Monday, rain or shine, to count birds. 🐦

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

PROGRAMS

Programs are held on the 2nd Thursday of the month at the Fairfield-Cordelia Library Meeting Room at 5050 Business Center Drive in Fairfield.

BIRDING IN NORTHERN COSTA RICA

Thursday, March 12, 7:00 p.m

Fairfield/Cordelia Library

Speaker: Mark & Lucas Stephenson



COLLARED ACARI

Kris, Lucas and I had the wonderful experience of spending 10 days in Northern Costa Rica after convincing my daughter, Claire, that it would be a great place to get married! Following her wedding, with the help of a wonderful guide, Marcos Mendez Sibaja, we traveled on our first birding excursion to the tropics, traveling through Guanacaste, Alajuela, and Puntarenas provinces. Our travels led us to such highlights as Palo Verde, Bijagua, Tenorio, Arenal, Monteverde, and the Tarcoles River Estuary. We will share our excursion through Northern Costa Rica from the beaches and lowland dry forests of Guanacasta, to the 2nd growth forests of Bijagua, the Volcanic slopes of Arenal, the famous Cloud Forests of Monteverde, and the crocodile infested waters of the Tarcoles River. Our photos of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians will convince you that Costa Rica is a wonderful country to explore.

Mark Stephenson is a graduate in Environmental Studies from Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts and spent summers developing Bird Surveys at Cornell's Sapsucker Woods, and leading birding expeditions for the Massachusetts' Audubon Society. After college Mark migrated to the Bay Area and obtained his teaching credentials and Masters in Education from Saint Mary's College. He taught for 12 years in Benicia Schools and worked over 20 years as a Principal at El Centro and Vichy Elementary in Napa Valley Unified. Mark and Kris' son, Lucas, began birding at the age of 8, now easily surpassing his Dad as a first class birder.

THE KESTREL SHOW: SIX SEASONS & THE FUTURE OF FALCO SPARVERIUS

Thursday, April 9, 7:00 p.m

Fairfield/Cordelia Library

Speaker: Holly Jessop



On Valentine's Day 2014, a pair of small falcons, American Kestrels (*Falco sparverius*), discovered a nesting opportunity in the backyard of our suburban home in Benicia, CA. We were instantly riveted by "The Kestrel Show" that followed, via this incredibly up-close window on their lives featuring frequent dramatic developments: Daily we laughed, cried, cheered, worried, mourned, and celebrated. In this presentation I will share the story of "our" Kestrels, which has continued for six consecutive nesting seasons so far, and will also review the population status and conservation outlook for these charismatic birds of prey that were once very common.

Holly Jessop, MS, MSPH, PhD is a scientist with degrees in astronomy, computer science, public health, and conservation biology. She is currently an epidemiologist at the California Environmental Protection Agency in Sacramento but is otherwise obsessed with all things avian (but especially raptors). Holly is also a Director at Large on the NSAS Board focusing on citizen science.

FIELD TRIPS

Note: Most field trips require RSVPs to the trip coordinator. Please go to: <https://napasolanoadubon.com> for additional logistics and carpool info.

RODEO LAGOON AND CORTE MADERA CREEK ECO-PRESERVE

NSAS Members-Only

Sunday, March 1, 8:30am

Leader: Rich Cimino

FILLED (waiting list)

We will meet up with Rich Cimino of *Yellow Billed Tours* at the Surfers parking lot (restrooms available) at the end of Mitchell Road. First we will scout out the ocean and then walk around Rodeo Lagoon. Then head over to do low tide birding at Corte Madera Creek Eco-preserve.

HAMILTON/BEL MARIN WETLANDS – LAS GALLINAS

Saturday, March 28, 9:00 a.m.

Leader: Christina McWhorter, *Nursery and Site Manager*

Please RSVP by March 25, 2020

Hamilton Bel Marin Keys Restoration Project is restoring the wetlands that were destroyed when the old Hamilton AFB was created. We'll meet Christina at the nursery and she will review the restoration project for us, then we will continue out into the wetlands area to view birds in the area. This should take up the morning. Time and weather permitting we will then drive over to

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Las Gallinas Valley Sanitation ponds and walk the levees around some of the ponds. **Meet at 9:00 am** at the Nursery at Hamilton/Bel Marin Keys Wetland Restoration Project: 737 Aberdeen Rd., Novato.

*We will be eating in the field so please bring a lunch. **There is no limit for attendance, but please RSVP by March 25, 2020.***

GATES CANYON AND MIX CANYON, VACAVILLE Sunday, April 19, 7:40 a.m. Leader: Robin Leong

Join local birding expert Robin Leong for a day of birding Vacaville area. We will meet him at the entrance to Gates Canyon at 7:40. Then we will re-car-pool and head up Gates Canyon and before heading over to Mix Canyon, returning between 2:30 and 3:00. Dress appropriately and bring water and lunch. If you have walkie-talkies bring them so we can communicate between the cars. **Heavy rain cancels.**

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SALE

SATURDAY & SUNDAY
APRIL
18 & 19 10^{AM}-4^{PM}

SKYLINE WILDERNESS PARK
2201 IMOLA AVE NAPA

Hosted by the Napa Valley Chapter of the CNPS. Native plants create bird-friendly, bird-healthy gardens. **Current members receive 10% off during the entire sale! Free admission to the Park during the Sale.**



WALKS

Join our kid-friendly birding walks! This is a wonderful opportunity for young and old to learn about local ecosystems and the birds that inhabit them.

BEGINNING BIRD WALK: LAGOON VALLEY, FAIRFIELD Sunday, March 15, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Leader: Holly Jessop & Lauri Puzo

There will be a brief presentation (subject to follow) prior to beginning our walk. Bring binoculars, water, hats, sunscreen and enthusiasm.

*For those new to birding and do not have binoculars we will have some to loan out. **Rain may cancel the walk.***

Directions: From Hwy. 80 exit Pena Adobe Rd. going North and Cherry Glenn going South. *There is a parking fee.* Meet at the parking lot past the dog park.

BEGINNING BIRD WALK: WETLANDS EDGE PARK, AMERICAN CANYON Sunday, April 5, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Leader: Holly Jessop & Lauri Puzo

There will be a brief presentation (subject to follow) prior to beginning our walk. Bring binoculars, water, hats, sunscreen and enthusiasm.

*For those new to birding and do not have binoculars we will have some to loan out. **Rain may cancel the walk.***

Directions: From Hwy. 29 turn onto Rio Del Mar and immediately turn right onto Eucalyptus Dr. and continue to the end. Meet at the gate by the parking lot.

Bird Box Monitoring



Holly Jessop is putting together a Bird Box Monitoring program and will be asking for your help!

Currently, we have a number of dedicated monitors but she could use more. Most of the boxes are located in Napa and American Canyon and possibly Vallejo.

We'd like to expand to more in Solano County but we need help to do that. Spring will be here before we know it and boxes will need repairing and cleaning before the birds can nest. Then the monitoring begins.

Please watch for an e-blast about volunteering, or contact Holly: hollyjessop14@gmail.com



Chestnut-backed Chickadee

A favorite feeder bird, our West Coast chickadees will gain a lot of year-round habitat in Canada but lose habitat here in Northern California. Their threats include extreme springtime heat that can imperil nestlings and heavy rainstorms that can flood nests. Our grandchildren may have to travel to Washington state or Vancouver to hear that familiar dee-dee-dee call.

Source: National Audubon Society

BECKY MATSUBARA / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Conservation Advocacy

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

My favorite Audubon ball cap

says, “Bird Hero,” and I want you to think of yourself that way. Why? Because you are the eyes, ears, and voices for birds, and the birds need you.

Audubon California Executive Director Sarah Rose noted that we are in the middle of a bird emergency, “Two out of three North American birds could face extinction due to climate change” (<https://ca.audubon.org/press-release/audubon-california-calls-congress-pass-new-bird-protection-bill>). As such, we have to be alert and act strategically locally, statewide, and nationally.

For instance, Representative Alan Lowenthal is sponsoring H.R.5552 to help migratory birds (<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/5552>). Read the bill and consider talking to your congressional representative about it. Or consider learning about the Salton Sea, a place of great importance to migrating birds, and letting Governor Newsom know how important it is for the state to take action on it – as he promised (<https://ca.audubon.org/news/gov-newsom-2020-must-be-year-action-salton-sea>).

Locally, if you notice a project planned or happening in your neighborhood that raises concerns, tell us. We do our best to track projects in our counties to make sure the welfare of the birds and their environments are considered. In Fall 2019, for example, we voiced concerns about tree removal at an incoming solar farm, rehabilitation of a gas station near a marsh, and unmonitored landfill work at a marsh. Concerned citizen members noticed something and contacted us.

So, if you see something (as they say) say something! **We have the ability to have an impact; we can raise awareness and make things better – and that counts. You count.** And your help is valuable, whether you spend an hour or become a regular volunteer. **Special thanks to Robin Leong, Murray Berner, and Carol Boykin for being bird heroes.** To be in touch with info, questions, or to join our committee or advocacy action list, please send an email to: [napiotrowski at yahoo dot com](mailto:napiotrowski@yahoo.com). 🌿



Calling all Bird Heros

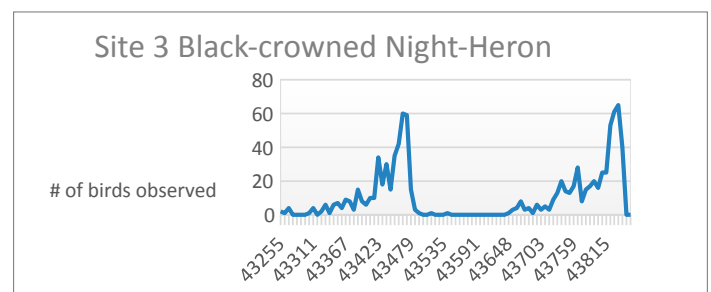
Join our efforts and make an impact today!
Contact Nancy Piotrowski:
[napiotrowski at yahoo dot com](mailto:napiotrowski@yahoo.com).

Amazing, Disappearing, Black-crowned Night-Herons

Tom Slyker



As part of Bird Seasons, in June 2018 we expanded our Monday morning route to include observations at a third location. The focus of this site is a pond where Common Gallinules are resident birds. In the spring we have seen adult birds with multiple generations of chicks feeding in the reeds. Besides the Gallinules the pond is a wintering site for Black-crowned Night-Herons (BCNH's). Included is a chart of our observations of BCNH's since we started monitoring this site. As the graph shows, these birds start showing up in small numbers in the fall and then the habitat builds to a crescendo in January when the reeds



in our pond and in the pond behind it are full of BCNH's. And then “POOF” the birds have disappeared. It is nature's magic. One day they are there and the next day they're gone.

There is a silver lining to this disappearing act. Less than a week after the BCNH's left us we had the first sighting of our Allen's Hummingbird. The tree it loves to sit in has just started to bud which is probably what brought this bird back for another spring. So, although we will no longer be graced with the presence of a flock of BCNH's, we are looking forward to months of seeing the Allen's buzz around us as we complete our weekly observations. 🌿



A Brief Summary of the 49th Angwin CBC

Murray Berner

To begin, the weather was perfect influencing what we saw. Particular groups of birds were broadly fewer, sometimes more.

The unusual geese will always be absent, or far less than the epic year of 2012, however, it would have been nice to find a Cackling Goose.

The majority of ducks were down in numbers, finding fewer at the larger reservoirs. Berryessa, when full or nearly so, naturally hosts fewer waterfowl; historically, that is not the case with Hennessey. Shorebirds were nonexistent and we missed Bonaparte's Gulls.

Totals of diurnal raptors were average except for kestrel but falcons were a little down. Screech-owls responded in

a number of locations, but N. Saw-whet did not. Unsolicited Great Horned Owls were noisy everywhere, triple the recent average and birders listened to a Spotted Owl after dinner. Except for Downy Woodpeckers, the majority of woodpecker species held steady to the average. We might have found a swallow if it had rained after sunrise when they tend to materialize over lakes.

A broad group of birds—chickadees and allies, wrens, kinglets, thrushes and warblers—were present in average numbers or a little above. Robins and starlings were fewer than expected. They may have exhausted much of the local waste grape and berry crop and, as is their habit, moved on. Be assured that Starlings are still out there.



BILL BOUTON / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Phainopepla was found at two sites in Pope Valley. Chipping Sparrow, more likely in winter these days, was a lone notable among sparrows. The count week's Summer Tanager in St. Helena is a first for this CBC. House Finch and American Goldfinch continue a general decline but seem to be leveling off. The wandering goldfinches may simply escape detection, present where we are not. Pine Siskin joined us in modest numbers this year.

Thanks to everyone that took part: the 46 birders in the field; Helen, Ava and Betty for the dinner. 🐦