



SONG SPARROW

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www.napasolanoaudubon.com

WINTER 2020 CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

- Dec. 12 Sat. Benicia CBC
Pre-Scout Field Trip
- Dec. 14 Mon. Benicia CBC
- Jan. 01 Fri. Angwin CBC
- Jan. 16 Fri. Hamilton/Bel-Marin
Wetlands

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



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DONATIONS APPRECIATED!

Napa-Solano Audubon Society welcomes gifts of funds, stock, or property, and bequests in general, or in honor or memory of a loved one. 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.**



MARK STEPHENSON

Tricolored Blackbirds: A Fight to Survive

By Tom Slyker

Initially this was going to be a short article for the newsletter about Tricolored Blackbirds or “Trikes” as they are called by birders in the know. The concept started with my receipt of an e-mail from Audubon CA with a headline declaring “VICTORY: 177,000 Tricolored Blackbirds Saved in 2020.” The e-mail described the actions of the US government, conservation organizations, and dairy farmers to protect an endangered species. I was aware that NSAS had a history of involvement with monitoring these birds and was interested in learning more. Curiosity got me to commit to writing a short article that would combine information about the species, NSAS’s involvement with the species, and the project being undertaken to protect these birds in coordination with the dairy industry in the San Joaquin Valley.

As I delved into internet information about Trikes and contacted Robin Leong to learn more about the NSAS’s work with these birds the scope of the article began to snowball. My personal knowledge of the Trikes was limited to two separate sightings during birding adventures and knowledge that Wendy Schackwitz, a past NSAS president, had been researching Trikes at Rush Ranch when I first met her. Researching Tricolored Blackbirds on the internet produced a wealth of information to share. Communications with Robin provided details of Trike monitoring work that NSAS has been doing since 1992. Robin also introduced me to Professor Robert Meese of UC Davis. Bob is known as “Mr. Trike” due to his 30+

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President's Corner

By Mark Stephenson, NSAS President



This is the time of year when we give thanks for all of our blessings. My biggest wish is for our members, families, and friends, and indeed all Americans, to stay healthy through the Holidays and in the coming year. I am thrilled that we have so many dedicated, hard working health care workers, first responders, and the promise of several very effective vaccines. I implore everyone to continue their diligent implementation of the 3 essential norms of covid safety including: wearing masks, keeping a safe distance from others, washing hands frequently, and staying outside in the fresh air or at home as much as possible. It is reassuring that it is safe to keep birding as long as you keep your distance from others and wear a mask!

This Fall our Board and volunteers have been hard at work continuing our NSAS Mission. I want to thank **Barbara Navolanic**, our Program's Chair, for her efforts coordinating our **Monthly Speaker Zoom Presentations**. In case you missed any of them, we have recordings posted on our website at: <http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/Main/2020-21SpeakerSeriesPage>. Please enjoy these informative presentations. I want to thank **Tom Slyker**, our Vice President, for publishing our very popular, bi-weekly **Birding Notes**. These are also posted on our website at: <http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/Main/BirdingNotesArchivePage>. Special thanks to **Robin Leong** and **Murray Berner** for once again coordinating this year's **Christmas Bird Counts**. Please help us out with this year's CBC's by contacting Robin at robin_leong@netzero.net and Murray at vireocity@hotmail.com. (See the CBC Column to the Right)!

Although we have postponed Field Trips during the Fall, we will begin them in limited fashion in the coming year. I want to thank **Carol Boykin**, **Wendy Cole** and **Bruce Thomsen**, our Field Trip Coordinators, for their efforts in scheduling these upcoming trips. All trips will be to areas with wide trails where participants can safely distance. We will ask participants to sign our waiver, keep at least 6 feet apart, wear masks at all times, and not to carpool, to help keep everyone safe.

Special thanks goes to **Sally Baumer**, our past president, who has worked tirelessly to help Tom and I make a seamless transition. Many thanks also go to **Patti Heidl** who has kept the databases of all of new members up to date, and to **David and Helena Kassel** for their consistent work as Treasurer and Secretary and assistance sending out our newsletters. Many thanks to **Nancy Piotrowski**, our Conservation Chair, who also Chairs the **Bay Area Council for Audubon California (BAAC)**, along with **Robin Leong**, who have kept us informed of the many Conservation issues this Fall including AB3030, the Highway 37 Redevelopment Plan, support for **Friends of San Pablo Bay's** research efforts to inform and protect the Bay as this highway is redesigned, as well as support for a Full-time Manager for the **San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge**. We have also written letters of support for USGS' proposal to help with long term Sea Rise and wildlife protection research impacting San Pablo Bay.

Finally, many thanks to **Holly Jessup** our Education Chair, who has helped coordinate our **Bluebird Nesting Boxes Program** with over 100 nest boxes across Napa and Solano Counties, and efforts to support young birders on field trips and in our schools. Together, our Board and members have made substantial efforts to continue work on our important Mission of Birding, Education, Citizen Science, and Habitat Conservation.

It is clear that NSAS is all about volunteering to support our mission! If you would like to help our efforts and volunteer in any capacity, please send me an email at NapaBirder@gmail.com.



Christmas Bird Count: Calling All Volunteers!

Our Annual Christmas Bird Counts (CBC's) are just around the Corner!

Napa Solano Audubon sponsors 2 CBC's! Despite the Coronavirus we will still send individuals and small family teams to various territories within the 15 mile circles to count bird species.

Please help out! This year we need as many volunteers as possible!



The 74th Benicia CBC Monday, December 14th.

It covers a 15 mile circle centered along Highway 680 including Benicia and many portions of Vallejo, Suisun, and American Canyon including Newell Open Space, Rockville Hills Regional Park, and part of Grizzly Island and Suisun Bay.

In recent years, this CBC typically counts over 160 species.

For details & how to participate: contact Robin Leong via email at robin_leong@netzero.net or by phone at 707-643-1287.



The 50th Angwin CBC Friday, January 1st.

Start the New Year off with a blast by participating in the Angwin CBC!

Covering a 15 mile circle centered near Angwin including the towns of St. Helena, Deer Park, Angwin, and Pope Valley, as well as Los Posadas State Forest, Bell Canyon, Lake Hennessey, and the western shores of Lake Berryessa, this CBC typically counts over 130 species. Due to the wildfires that have impacted parts of the count circle, it is especially important that we cover the circle well, this year and in the years to come, in order to follow and document the significant changes to birdlife that have occurred.

For details & how to participate: contact Murray Berner via email at vireocity@hotmail.com or by phone at 707-224-5897.

Calendar of Events

FIELD TRIPS

Note: All NSAS Field Trips will follow strict Covid protocols including social distancing, the wearing of masks at all times, a limit of 15 participants, and no carpooling. Field Trips will be taken at the participant's own risk and a signed Release of Liability Form per the National Audubon Recommendations, is required.

BENICIA CBC PRE-COUNT FIELD TRIP: LYNCH CANYON

Saturday, Dec. 12, 2020
9:00 a.m. – 1:00 or 2:00 p.m.
Leader: Robin Leong

Robin Leong will lead a Pre-CBC field trip to Lynch Canyon before the Benicia CBC. You will learn the ropes of a CBC including how to estimate bird populations and how to record species for a CBC. We are likely to find a variety of raptors, grassland birds, and more.

Bring: water, snacks and/or lunch. Lynch Canyon is a fee area and may require a fee of \$6.00 per vehicle.

For more info, contact: Robin Leong
robin_leong@netzero.net; 707-643-1287

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT: BENICIA, 74TH ANNUAL

Monday, Dec. 14, 2020; 7:00 a.m.

Join us for the 74th Benicia Christmas Bird Count (CBC)!

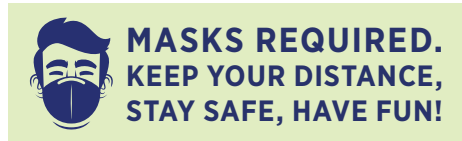
For more info, contact: Robin Leong
robin_leong@netzero.net; 707-643-1287

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT: ANGWIN, 50TH ANNUAL

Friday, Jan. 01, 2021; 7:00 a.m.

Join us for the 50th Angwin Christmas Bird Count (CBC)! Due to the wildfires that have impacted parts of the count circle, it is especially important that we cover the circle well, this year and in the years to come, in order to follow and document the significant changes to birdlife that will occur. Start the New Year off with a blast by participating in the Angwin CBC!

For more info, contact: Murray Berner
vireocity@hotmail.com



HAMILTON/BEL MARIN WETLANDS - LAS GALLINAS

Saturday, Jan. 16, 2021, 9:00 a.m.

Leader: Christina McWhorter, Nursery and Site Manager

Due to Covid-19 restrictions there is a limit of 10 people. Please RSVP by Wednesday Jan. 06, 2021.

Hamilton Bel Marin Keys Restoration Project is restoring the wetlands that were destroyed when the old Hamilton AFB was created. We will meet at the nursery and Christina will review the restoration project for us, then we will continue out into the wetlands to view birds. *This should take up the morning.* Time and weather permitting we will drive to Las Gallinas Valley Sanitation ponds and walk the levees around some of the ponds. We may see waterfowl, shorebird, clapper rail, San Pablo song sparrow, raptors, great-tailed grackle, night herons, marsh wren, sora.

Bring: Walking shoes (we may walk up to a mile or more at a time), water, hat, binoculars, spotting scopes, rain gear in case, snacks, lunch, sunscreen, mask.
Contact: brucecthomsen@yahoo.com
M: (209) 728-4631; H: (707) 224-1906

Bird Sighting Tools & Beyond: Find Birds in Your Area

by Mark Stephenson

Recently, I've been asked by several birding friends how Lucas and I go about finding rare or uncommon birds in the Bay Area.

For example, in our area in the last couple of weeks, birders have sighted a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at American Canyon Wetlands, a Snow Bunting in Lynch Canyon, and a Tropical Kingbird at Lake Dalwigk Park in Vallejo. It made me realize that many of our members may not be aware of several tools that are incredibly helpful in finding birds that have been seen nearby or somewhere else in the Bay Area, California, and beyond and deepen your knowledge of birding. I will describe a few of our favorites: **eBird**, **Birding Lists Digest**, and messaging apps such as **Telegram**, **Twitter**, or **GroupMe**.

• **eBird**, located at eBird.org, is undoubtedly the most powerful birding tool available. During the last decade, **Cornell's Laboratory of Ornithology** has compiled the extensive eBird database that includes hundreds of millions of world-wide bird sightings which can be viewed on your computer or smart phone. It catalogues what was seen, where it was seen, and by whom, along with photos and audio recordings when they are submitted by the birder along with their checklist. It also maintains your personal checklists by date, location, county, and state in the section entitled "My eBird."

After you set up a personal account using your email and login name, you can begin submitting your checklists either on your computer at home or on your smart phone in the field. The phone app allows you to make lists as

you bird and is a convenient way to keep track of all of your sightings. You can use 4 letter bird banding codes to instantly list a species you have seen. *You will never misplace your checklists again!* When you are birding in a group, everyone can even share the same list. You can also explore other members sightings by location or by species of interest.

eBird also identifies Hotspots, or the best places for birding in your vicinity, and the world. You can find checklists from other birders who have submitted lists for every hotspot. This is a fantastic tool when you are on a birding trip in a new location or state. There are also species maps that show the locations for world-wide sightings of all species. You can drill down on the map to find sightings in places of interest in

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Bird Sighting Tools *(cont'd from page 3)*

your country, state or in your local vicinity.

Under your "My eBird" account, you can subscribe for alerts for either rarities or your personal needs (species you haven't yet seen). You will receive an email alert when either rarities are seen within the counties or states that you choose or if a bird you need for your own checklist has been found. eBird is truly an amazing tool!

• **Birding Lists Digest** is found at: digest.sialia.com and is an eMail forum or mailing list of daily sightings reported by birders, grouped by location, usually in clusters of counties throughout California and the U.S. For example, **North Bay Birds** includes sightings in Sonoma, Marin, Napa, Lake and Solano Counties. This is how we learned about the Snow Bunting Sighting. Anyone who is a member may post sightings to the groups to which they belong.

Traditionally these were reserved for rare and uncommon sightings, but recently, reports have been including such sightings as first of year or season, Big Day checklists, and more common neighborhood or backyard birds.

East Bay Birds includes sightings in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties. **Central Valley Birds** includes sightings in and near the Central Valley including Yolo, Sacramento, Colusa, etc.

When Lucas spotted the Bar-tailed Godwit in Santa Cruz, a first county record, we posted it on the local birding list called Monterey Birds, and within minutes other birders arrived to try to observe it. You sign up to a particular group by clicking on the **Official Archives Button** on the Birding Lists Digest Home Page found next to the group lists which are of interest to you. You simply register with your email account.

• **Messaging Apps:** There are any number of messaging apps used by members of a birding group that set up a **Group Chat** to instantly communicate with their friends. When in the field, you can message members of your group of a rare find or an important sighting. These apps are useful since texts often work when there is little to no phone service, since they require less band-width, and can reach many others at the click of a button. At the Biggest Week, the organizers used **Twitter**. Many Bay Area Birders use **Telegram** in a group called **Bay Area Rare Bird Alert**. The San Luis Obispo birders use **GroupMe** in a group called **Slobird**. You begin by simply subscribing to the group, or by being invited to be part of a group, used by your birding friends, and presto begin receiving their texts or tweets. ♦

Oh...Dear...Me...Birding in your Neighborhood

By Carol Boykin

Napa Solano Audubon is trying to figure out how to start up leading walks again. Being safe is our highest priority! In the meantime, until things calm down, we are on our own.



MARK STEPHENSON

O...dear...me. What is singing that sad song in my back yard? I look out the window and hear again, 'O dear me.' Finally, I see a small brown bird. It's a Golden-crowned Sparrow back for the winter after a summer breeding in Alaska. While

birding on our own during these times, we need all the help we can get to identify our little flying neighbors. Learning mnemonics helps a lot. We all know the California Quail's call, "Chicago" and the Killdeer saying its name, "Kill-dee." Near the easy to identify White-crowned Sparrow, look for the White-throated sparrow with the call "Sweet Canada Canada." You may need to use your imagination or make up some of your own. The American Goldfinch makes me hungry singing "potato chip chip chip." If I eat some chips then I am thirsty and it may be the Olive-sided Flycatcher saying "Quick three beers," but my friends know it is probably me. ♦

National Audubon's Climate Watch Program *(cont'd from back page)*

When looking at the national data, Audubon has learned that species response to climate change varies according to species and season. Climate changes impact both winter feeding grounds and summer breeding areas and vary by species. With the data collected so far, it appears that both WBL and WBNU are leaving sites that are worsening in climate suitability during the winter. This could be the result that colder winter temperatures are more limiting to their food sources and forcing them to move. However in summer, while WBL are moving to more favorable areas, WBNU are not! This may suggest that Bluebirds are responding faster to change, or that Nuthatches are more flexible in their breeding climate requirements, or that they haven't adjusted yet to climate change and are still remaining in less favorable areas. This could result in WBNU's being more at risk in maintaining their populations due to the fact they are attempting to breed in less suitable locations.

Although interpretation of the data is really early, and conclusions are likely to change once we collect more data, these 2 species are adapting differently in their summer breeding territories.

For a more in-depth look at Climate Research Team's data, visit the Audubon's Climate Watch Results page at this link: <https://www.audubon.org/climate-watch-results>.

If you are an experienced birder and would like to help out, please contact Mark Stephenson at NapaBirder@gmail.com ♦

Conservation Advocacy

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

The truth is, birds cannot vote. This means we must come together to help them speak and get what they need. And this year, we did pretty good.

Thanks to everyone who showed up at the virtual advocacy day, wrote letters, made phone calls, or otherwise pitched in to help with our advocacy efforts, particularly at the state level.

Two things I would like to report on pertain to rodenticides and land and water protections. **First, AB1788 was signed into law.** So, we now have protections against use of secondary anti-coagulant rodenticides harming wildlife they were not intended to harm. You can see the law here: <https://tinyurl.com/AB1788LAW> as written today. **Second, though AB3030 was not passed, Governor Newsom issued an executive order (see <https://tinyurl.com/Newsom3030>) that contained many provisions to address what AB3030 was aiming to achieve.** Essentially it addresses the goal of protecting 30% of California's lands and waters by 2030.

This also makes California the first state in the US to make such a commitment, joining 38 countries around the world in similar action. The order benefits all Californians, especially those from disadvantaged communities through focusing on natural and working lands projects that will encourage healthy soils management, coastal wetlands restoration, and active forest management to reduce risks and restore health, and green infrastructure in urban areas.

In addition, we continue to participate in local efforts to track developments in our counties and respond with proactive feedback to shape efforts to be bird friendly.

If you like to read documents on developments that might affect birds and their habitats, or to attend meetings to gather information or speak on behalf of birds, let me know. We would like to have your help and join our advocacy action list.

Email any time: napiotrowski@yahoo.com. ♦

We Need You! Help Save Birds & Their Habitats.

Did you know? Of the 314 North American birds identified by the National Audubon as either climate threatened or climate endangered, more than 170 commonly occur in California. Contact Nancy: napiotrowski@yahoo.com for more information.



ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD / BECKY MATSUBARA

Tricolored Blackbirds Survival

(cont'd from page 1)



LINDA PITTMAN

years of research on the Tricolored Blackbird species and his efforts to protect these birds.

This wealth of information quickly turned into an article much too long to be included in a newsletter. So, we decided to send you this study of the Tricolored Blackbirds and the efforts underway to protect this species in a "special" issue of our Biweekly *Birding Notes*, in December. If you are a NSAS member and have not provided us with your e-mail address you won't be receiving this biweekly update. However, these *Birding Notes* are being archived on our website and you will be able to find a copy of this Trike article there once it has been released. As an alternative you can provide me with your e-mail address by sending a message to solanoBirder@gmail.com indicating you want to receive the *Birding Notes*.

As a closing thought, imagine it is 1859 and you are traveling from Santa Barbara to San Diego on the El Camino Real. You might be walking on this journey or you might be lucky enough to be riding a horse or traveling in a stagecoach. As you are traveling from mission to mission along the road, you will be seeing and hearing the birds in the countryside around you. And, according to James Cooper, a naturalist who journaled his findings at the time, the most common species of bird you would see and hear was not a swallow, or a sparrow, or a vulture, or even a crow. The bird that you would observe more than any other was the Tricolored Blackbird.

You would be hard pressed to find any Trikes along this same route today. Reading the article in our *December Birding Notes* will provide you with insight as to what has happened to this once common, now endangered species and the efforts that are being undertaken to protect them. ♦

Support NSAS

Volunteer, donate, like us on Facebook and spread the word.



Napa-Solano Participates in National Audubon's Climate Watch Program!

By Mark Stephenson

As of 2016, more than 1,100 volunteers have traversed habitats across the U.S. to look for bluebirds and nuthatches, in National Audubon's Climate Watch Program.

This is a community, science-based volunteer program that integrates species range projections with community scientists' data collected during the winter months of Jan/Feb and the summer months of May/June. During the past 4 years, climate watch participation expanded greatly to include 26 states with 50 regional coordinators. Napa-Solano Audubon is one of the participating groups that joined in 2017.

We've sent teams to parks throughout Napa and Solano including Bothe-Napa Valley State Park, Moore Creek, Trancas Crossing, Oxbow Preserve, Westwood Hills, and Alston Parks, along with Partrick Road, Calistoga's Oat Hill Mine Trail, and Rockville Hills Regional Park. Our teams have targeted White-breasted Nuthatches (WBNU).

For each location, teams of 2 have 12 five-minute point



WBNU / RYAN HODNETT

counts, spaced several hundred yards apart, where we record all species seen and heard. (Of course, we hope to see or hear White-breasted Nuthatches at each point!) This information is then submitted to the national team. Wendy & Mike Schackwitz, David LeLand, Tiffany Erickson, Lucas Stephenson, and myself make up the Napa Team and Andrew Ford and Nancy Kerson make up the Solano Team. (Many apologies if I have missed anyone).

Beginning in the Winter of 2021, we are looking for a few more experienced birders to help out.

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

