



# SONG SPARROW

Fall 2021 Vol. 51 No. 2B  
www.napasolanoaudubon.com

## FALL 2021 CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

- Sep. 09 Thu. Zoom Presentation: Tracking the Mystery Owl of Mexico
- Sep. 11 Sat. Walk: Putah Creek
- Sep. 18 Sat. Martinez Shoreline Field Trip
- Sep. 18 Sat. Walk: Kennedy Park
- Sep. 25 Sat. Walk: Lake Solano Regional Park
- Oct. 02 Sat. Walk: Skyline Regional Park
- Oct. 09 Sat. Walk: Grasslands Regional Park (Tentative)
- Oct. 16 Sat. Walk: American Canyon Wetlands
- Oct. 23 Sat. Walk: Benicia State Recreation Area
- Oct. 30 Sat. Walk: San Pablo Bay Trail

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



## Fall Walks & Activities

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

[napasolanoaudubon.com](https://napasolanoaudubon.com)



VERDIN / MARK STEPHENSON

## Arizona Spring Break Birding Trip

By Mark and Lucas Stephenson

**April 1:** Lucas and I decided to return to Southern Arizona for his Spring Vacation the first week of April 2021 after not having been there for 5 years, when we visited the state during his 4th grade Spring Break in 2016. We loved our first trip and were hoping this trip would be just as much fun!

On the drive to the Sacramento airport, a number of **Swainson's Hawks** were soaring over a freshly cut hay field where a small flock of **Cattle Egrets** foraged for insects and rodents; good omens for our trip! After flying into Phoenix and checking out a rental SUV we headed to **Monterey Park** where Ruddy Ground Doves had recently been seen associating with Inca Doves.

As we pulled up a pair of **Rosy-Faced Lovebirds** flew up into a palm tree and a **Gila Woodpecker** called noisily from an Oak. A **cute yellow-faced Verdin** called from nearby mesquite along the street. Sure enough, adjacent hundreds of **Mourning Doves**, and a few **Inca Doves**, we found 3 **Ruddy Ground Doves** foraging for seeds in the park's green lawn. Their small size, rusty wings with jet black spots, and bright red eye made them stand out from the other doves.

They readily fed on the ground in front of us and occasionally flew up into

*Continued on page 2*

# President's Corner

By Mark Stephenson, NSAS President



As we begin my 2nd year at the helm of NSAS, I pray that all our community efforts at vaccination and masking will pay off, and the corona virus will be subdued so that we can proceed with our important work.

Thankfully, hiking and birding outside in the fresh air is one of the safest activities possible! Recently we held a Planning Meeting and developed our 5-Year Plan highlighting our Mission, Goals, and Activities that we hope will guide us for the future. In a nutshell, our Mission is to *“engage people in the wonder of birding, to increase our understanding of birds and their habitats through education and citizen science and transfer this inspiration into meaningful action that supports the protection of birds and their habitats.”*

To this endeavor, we will continue to hold weekly walks in our local parks led by Andrew Ford and monthly trips led by local experts.

Second, our Monthly Speaker Series will continue via Zoom on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. Look for Zoom links in our emails and website. When libraries reopen during the evening hours we will hold in-person meetings again.

Third, we are committed to hiring a part-time Education Coordinator to restart our popular school programs with a target of reaching 1,000 students, as well as organizing Community Festivals to reach out to our families and community members.

Fourth, we will continue our Citizen Science activities including Christmas Bird Counts, Bird Seasons, Bluebird Boxes, Climate Research, and Endangered Species Surveys. This year, Tom Slyker and a host of volunteers have led teams to successfully complete all of our Research Projects!

Finally, we have participated with Audubon California and a host of other organizations in lobbying for the protection of birds and habitats throughout the Bay Area and State. We are looking forward to another exciting and fulfilling year! ♦

## Too Much Paper?

If you're getting the newsletter in your home mailbox and would prefer to go paperless, you can request an email version at **Napabirder@gmail.com**. Newsletters can also be viewed and downloaded on our website if preferred.

## Arizona Spring Break Birding Trip

*(Continued from page 1)*

the nearby trees exposing their red wings and black tail edgings. They were a “lifer” U.S. bird for us and a great way to kick off the trip! The grassy field also produced several **Chipping Sparrows**, **dark-lored White-crowned Sparrows**, and a **Lark Sparrow** making this a bountiful stop.

To read the entire article, and see many more photos, visit our **Rare Bird Alert Page** on our NSAS website located at: [http://www.napcsolanoaudubon.com/nsas/RareBirdAlert/Arizona\\_Spring\\_Birding.pdf](http://www.napcsolanoaudubon.com/nsas/RareBirdAlert/Arizona_Spring_Birding.pdf) ♦

## Board of Directors

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### Director at Large

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### 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 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.**



*Meet new friends while  
making a difference.*



MARK STEPHENSON / RUDY GROUND DOVE



# Calendar of Events

## PROGRAMS

**Note:** Programs are held on the second Thursday of the month via Zoom. We encourage everyone to attend. You will be given the meeting connection details when you RSVP.

### TRACKING THE MYSTERY OWL OF MEXICO

Thursday, Sept. 9, 2021, 7:00 p.m.  
By Nathan Pieplow



#### Monthly speaker series kick off!

In 2015, Nathan Pieplow and Andrew Spencer obtained the first-ever photographs, videos, and audio recordings of the **Cinereous Owl**, a little-known bird of the mountains of Mexico. This talk tells the exciting story of their hunt for the owl across three years and thousands of miles, and their surprising discoveries about its biology and taxonomy.

**Nathan Pieplow** is an instructor for Writing and Rhetoric at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He teaches classes in writing and rhetoric for engineers and science majors and a course in the rhetoric of humor. He is an avid bird watcher and has written a "Field Guide to Bird Songs", as well as "Peterson Guides to Bird Sounds of Eastern and Western North America". He has been a frequent speaker at birding symposiums and for the Western Field Ornithologists.

## FIELD TRIPS

**Note:** For everyone's protection, all participants are **required to be vaccinated and wear masks when in close proximity.** (Children under 12 not eligible for vaccinations are required to wear masks.) Field trips will be taken at the participant's own risk. In accordance with National Audubon Recommendations, **participants must sign the Release of Liability and Covid Release Forms.**

**Limited to 15 participants. Members have first priority.**

**Bring:** Proof of vaccination, Covid form, mask, water, snacks, day pack & lunch.



BECKY MATSUBARA

### MARTINEZ SHORELINE

Saturday, September 18  
8:30 am - 3:00 pm  
Leader: Bruce Thomsen

We will visit the Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline, Radke Martinez Regional Shoreline, and the Waterbird Regional Preserve. The trip begins at 8:00 a.m. at the Nejedly Staging Area, Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline. *Details for the trip will be sent out to those who have signed up for our Field Trip eBlast and posted on our website.* **Sign-up required. Size limitation.**



**MASKS REQUIRED.  
KEEP YOUR DISTANCE,  
STAY SAFE, HAVE FUN!**

## Become a Member!

Annual Membership is only \$25 for individuals and \$35 for families. Call us or click on our website's JOIN Button.

## WEEKLY WALKS

**Note:** For everyone's protection, all participants are **required to be vaccinated and wear masks when in close proximity.** (Children under 12 not eligible for vaccinations are required to wear masks.) Walks will be taken at the participant's own risk. In accordance with National Audubon Recommendations, **participants must sign the Release of Liability and Covid Release Forms.**

**All walks are from 8:00 a.m - Noon and open to everyone. There is no size limit.**

**Andrew Ford** is leader/organizer for all the weekly walks. He will send out email invites via an eblast, on the week of the trip with trip meeting locations. If Andrew is unavailable, a **NSAS Board Member** will be there to lead.

**Bring:** Proof of vaccination, Covid form, water, snacks, day pack, with lunch optional following the walk.

**For more information,** contact Andrew: [ajf51@humboldt.edu](mailto:ajf51@humboldt.edu)

### PUTAH CREEK

Saturday, Sept. 11

### KENNEDY PARK

Saturday, Sept. 18

### LAKE SOLANO REGIONAL PARK

Saturday, Sept. 25

### SKYLINE REGIONAL PARK

Saturday, Oct. 02

### GRASSLANDS REGIONAL PARK (TENTATIVE)

Saturday, Oct. 09

### AMERICAN CANYON WETLANDS

Saturday, Oct. 16

### BENICIA STATE RECREATION AREA

Saturday, Oct. 23

### SAN PABLO BAY TRAIL

Saturday, Oct. 30

# Meet Our Two Scholarship Winners



**Jade Schlatter** is a graduate from St. Helena High and will be a Biology major at Northeastern University. Besides AP Environmental Science and Biology, she is an AP Scholar and Honors student. She participated in the Napa Resource Conservation District Youth Stewardship Council organizing the

*Acorn to Oaks* program which planted oak trees across our county. She is interested in sustainable agricultural practices and educating the public about the importance of native species. She planned several volunteer activities including river cleanups, food drives, fundraisers for fires, and a green recycling program. In addition, she was captain of her high school cross country team, and a track star.

**An excerpt from her essay:** *"As an altruistic person, I will only feel fulfilled in life by taking action and working to improve the world. I am passionate about preserving local ecology by implementing sustainable agricultural practices, preserving untouched habitats, enhancing natural ecosystems, and helping endangered species to flourish. I want to serve as an instrument of change!"* **Congratulations Jade!** We look forward to hearing about your endeavors at Northwestern!



**Liesl Wolf Heinemann** is a graduate from St. Helena High where she was Class President and member of the Volleyball, Lacrosse, and Tennis Teams. She plans to study Viticulture and Enology at Cal Poly. Liesl has served as the Youth Commissioner on the NC Wildlife Conservation

Commission where she helped decide the funding of conservation organizations and activities throughout the valley. She helped raise \$500,000 and organize the replacement of the out-of-date Sulpher Creek Fish Ladder in an effort to protect endangered species including native steelhead and salmon. She has interned at a number of wineries and is particularly interested in organic, fish-friendly, and biodynamic farming practices that help protect our natural resources.

**In her own words:** *"...We are extremely fortunate to live in such a beautiful environment. It is our duty to assume the responsibility for taking care of this wonderful valley and protecting its wildlife and ecosystems."*

**Congratulations Liesl!** We look forward to hearing from you about your experiences at Cal Poly!

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## eBird, a Powerful Research and Conservation Tool

By Mark Stephenson

During the last decade, Cornell's Laboratory of Ornithology has compiled an extensive database that includes more than a Billion world-wide bird sightings which can be viewed on your computer or smart phone.

eBird, located at **eBird.org** is an essential birding, research and conservation tool. In fact, eBird has grown to become the world's largest biodiversity-related citizen-science project on earth. eBird allows you to keep track of your personal checklists as well as your year and life lists. It catalogues what you observed, where it was seen, and with whom, along with photos and audio recordings when submitted with your checklists. eBird is like a huge file cabinet that allows you to find your past sightings, checklists, photos, and recordings at the touch of a button. It organizes them by date, location, and species in the section entitled **"My eBird."** eBird automatically shares all checklists with other birders allowing everyone to benefit from each others observations. Using the **Explore Tab**, you can find both recent or historical sightings from other birders by looking up the individual species of interest, or by reviewing checklists from specific locations zooming from states and counties to specific **Hotspots** using real-time maps. You can even set up alerts to notify you when a rare or target

bird has been seen near you. eBird is just as valuable a tool for Beginners as it is for expert birders. The **Science Tab** displays bird population whereabouts and movements on a dynamic map showing a bird's range and timing of migration. eBird's database has been used for numerous student projects and by researchers for hundreds of peer-reviewed publications and archives important data for essential conservation work around the world.

### How do you use eBird?

**Step 1:** Set up an account at eBird.org by using an email or username on your computer or smart phone.

**Step 2:** Download the App to your Smart Phone or visit eBird.org and sign into your account on your computer.

**Step 3:** Begin observations by clicking the **Start Checklist Button** and recording the species and numbers of each bird you observe. When entering sightings on a smart phone you can use 4-Letter Banding Codes (Generally the first 2 letters of the Bird's First and Last name: i.e. CATO for CALifornia TOwhee) to easily pop-up each species, saving you lots of time in the field. You can record the number of each species observed by entering the number or clicking on the "+" sign each time you see the same species. When you are finished with your walk, note whether you were stationary or

*Continued on page 5*

## Conservation Advocacy

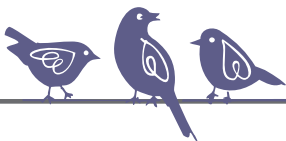
Nancy A. Piotrowski, Ph.D.,  
NSAS Conservation Chair

Fire season is here so I would like to remind you that if you can put out extra water for birds and other wildlife, this is a good time to do it. As they are displaced from areas affected by fire, they may fly through your neighborhood. So do help them out with a little water.

Speaking of fire season, this is also one of those times when folks are paying a lot of attention to their trees. At a recent Bay Area Audubon Council meeting, we heard a few stories about concerns folks had over how PG&E is working on saving trees for birds. We want to encourage anyone who has had concerns about how they have operated in your area. We are in the process of trying to reach out to increase communication to encourage improvements wherever possible. Again, your input would be welcome.

And also, on your input — one of the biggest projects coming to our region to affect birds is the plan to widen Highway 37. As the newsletter goes to press, we are still waiting to hear about additional federal funding to address planning for the work. But we expect that this will eventually come and there will be an increase in opportunities for public input. There have been many groups in discussion on this matter for some time, but until it is done, it is not done. And so, we need to track the project and make sure there is input where needed. So, if you have suggestions for input, we would love to hear your ideas, and if you have specific concerns about the project, let us know.

To join our advocacy action list, or to submit feedback, please email: [napiotrowski at yahoo dot com](mailto:napiotrowski@yahoo.com). ♦



### Calling all Bird Heros

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

## eBird, a Powerful Research and Conservation Tool

*(Continued from page 4)*

the distance you traveled, and the location using the built in GPS point, or the map. The **Tracking Toggle**, automatically records the time and enters the location along with the path you took.

**Step 4:** Submit your list. You should review your list and make any corrections before submitting to produce an accu-

## Citizen Scientists at NSAS

*(Continued from page 6)*

at Cullinan Ranch. Least Terns are also a species of concern, and we were asked to monitor this colony. It was disconcerting to watch a Harrier fly off with a captured chick. Predation definitely whittled down the breeding success of this colony and in the end, we counted about 20 chicks that fledged from a colony of over 200 birds.

- We had 14 volunteers who worked as teams to monitor 75 Western Bluebird Nesting Boxes that NSAS has placed in multiple locations throughout Napa County. These boxes provided hours of enjoyment for these teams from tracking the beginning of nests to the finding of eggs to monitoring the growth of chicks from little “nudies” just hatched from an egg to full sized fledged birds. In all, the boxes we monitored fledged 203 Western Bluebirds, 88 Tree Swallows, and 3 Ash-throated Flycatchers. It was a very successful nesting season!

- As an additional note, NSAS members also provide most of the manpower for monitoring the 50 nesting boxes that are located at Lynch Canyon and managed by the Solano Land Trust. These boxes contributed many more fledged Bluebirds, Swallows, and Flycatchers to the local birding population.

### Why should you participate?

There is a significant amount of satisfaction that comes from joining a Citizen Science project. It may not provide the thrill of tracking down a rare bird to add to your life list, but it does provide the opportunity to become closely intertwined with the daily activities and routines of the birds around us.

NSAS has a wide range of Citizen Science projects that we try to support, and we would definitely like to do more. This work requires the participation of many “front-line data collectors” who are the backbone of all of these projects. *If you would like to help with a project and experience the joys of being a Citizen Scientist, please contact Tom Slyker at [solanobirder@gmail.com](mailto:solanobirder@gmail.com).* ♦

rate record of your sightings. Remember you are collecting important data on the birds you observed.

**Step 5:** You are now one of the many citizen scientists using eBird to record bird observations across the globe and build an essential database on birds for research and conservation! ♦



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## Citizen Scientists at NSAS

By Tom Slyker

### Who are we? We're the front-line data collectors.

We track the birds and monitor the nests. We document our findings so they can be pooled with observations of many other birders who contribute findings to Citizen Science websites.

**Why do we do it?** It's a tri-fold answer.

- One reason is that this information, which is being generated in many different locations, is being used to monitor annual changes in bird populations and migration habits. There is a correlation between Climate Change and bird behavior patterns. By having a large enough pool of data for analysis, researchers are able to begin to understand the effects of climate change and start to predict what may happen in the future based on current trends.

- The second reason we monitor the birds is for the companionship of bird-

ing with others. Citizen Science is primarily a team activity and a shared experience. It is an enjoyable way to meet and interact with other members of the NSAS birding community.

- And the third reason is the birds. It's a joy to know that your efforts have helped enable birds to find suitable nesting sites and raise their young. It's easy to become absorbed as you become "parents" to families of birds.

**What did we accomplish?** There are a few examples of Citizen Science projects from this summer:

- Audubon Canyon Ranch (ACR) has a long-standing project of monitoring nesting Herons and Egrets in our area. Multiple rookeries reside in Napa and Solano Counties and some NSAS members help monitor these sites.

It's fun to watch and welcome more than 100 noisy, squawking GREG chicks



GREG SCHECHTER

to life. Especially fun is watching them jam their head down a parent's throat while they are being fed. Being in the presence of all these birds makes me smile and chuckle and delight in the creation of new life.

- SFBBO asked for help to monitor nesting Snowy Plovers, a "threatened species", in the wetlands along Hwy 37. Although we were unable to find any nesting Plovers, we did discover a flight of Least Terns which led to the discovery of a colony of about 200 Terns

*Continued on page 5*